

Education as Relation-Improvement: A Hermeneutic-Comparative Analysis of *Orbis Pictus* and *the Three Character Classic*

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Date: 29/06/2026

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a hermeneutic-comparative analysis of John Amos Comenius's *Orbis Pictus* and the Chinese classic *The Three Character Classic*. These two educational texts are highly influential within their respective educational traditions and serve as important introductory materials for young learners. This thesis does not treat these texts merely as literacy materials, but rather as forms of educational representation, through which the older generation represents a specific world to children and shapes their relations with certain aspects of that world.

The thesis is grounded in a relational understanding of education, in which educators intentionally improve the learner's relations with specific aspects of the world during the educational process. Methodologically, this research combines hermeneutic textual analysis, the 5W1H analytical framework, and Freiberger's comparative framework. Using this approach, this thesis analyses and compares each text around five selected improvable relations: the relations between the learner and sound, words, discourse, action, and the world or social order.

Through analysis and comparison, this thesis argues that *Orbis Pictus* introduces children to a world that is perceivable, nameable, ordered, and ultimately rooted in divine creation. By contrast, *The Three Character Classic* introduces children to a world organised through rhythm, recitation, moral exemplars, historical continuity and social hierarchy. In the teaching of these two texts, whilst pronunciation, vocabulary and sentences are taught and learnt, ideas about how to understand the world and how to act within it, as well as the kind of people learners are expected to become, are simultaneously conveyed. Through a direct comparison of these two classic texts, this thesis constructs a relational framework that interprets these texts as condensed pedagogical worlds, thereby contributing to educational scholarship.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Rationale for this research

My interest in this research grew out of personal observations. I have worked and studied across Asia, Africa, and Europe. In my experience, I found significant differences in how students from diverse backgrounds engage in educational settings. For example, most of my British classmates tend to be more active and engaged in the classroom, and more confident and calmer in their interactions with the teacher, whereas I, along with many Chinese students I have known, tend to be more introverted and reserved, treating the teacher with a sense of awe and distance. These observations raised questions about the factors that have influenced these differences. Answering this question is not straightforward. The differences cannot be attributed to a single cause. Speculatively, they could be attributed to factors such as innate genetic dispositions, family upbringing, accumulated life experience, or broader social norms at home or in school; however, inconclusively, there may be many other factors closely linked to an individual's life circumstances and difficult to trace and study. While some influences take effect immediately, others may accumulate over the years. These observations suggest that perhaps behavioural and attitudinal patterns are not simply products of their immediate environment but are also, in important ways, shaped by history.

This historical dimension is central to the approach taken in this thesis. Many forces shape human behaviour and social norms, including religion, economics, politics, and family structure. Such characteristics can thus be linked to the social influences and culture in which people are raised, and the behavioural patterns, value systems, and attitudes towards knowledge and authority that people exhibit today may be said to

have been influenced by the past. Studying the past may help explain conditions that persist in the present. Within this context, education (in its broadest sense) could perhaps be understood as a significant and traceable channel through which adults have represented the world to young people in schools. Unlike the other forces, education is explicitly and intentionally concerned with the formation of the next generation. It may be understood as the process by which adults introduce children to the world by organising and transmitting knowledge, values, practices, and ways of relating to others. This makes education a particularly productive lens through which to examine how certain patterns of thought, behaviour and attitudes towards knowledge and authority may be reproduced across generations. Examining educational practice, therefore, offers a meaningful starting point for understanding the differences between student populations.

Yet the education of the past is not easy to study directly. Its practices are carried out through schools or other such arrangements across different times and places and have employed a variety of pedagogical activities and instructional forms, such as games, social practice, self-study, and classroom instruction, each reflecting assumptions about what children should learn and how they should relate to knowledge and authority. Yet they are difficult to trace. Many leave few lasting records, and physical objects such as classroom tools or learning materials offer only partial glimpses. Written texts, however, occupy a privileged position among historical evidence, as they were produced intentionally, have survived over time, and offer a relatively stable view of what the educators wished to transmit. Thus, given the difficulty of reconstructing individual learning histories or household teaching practices, this research focuses on textbooks as its primary object of study.

According to Kodliuk et al. (2021, p.1), ‘A textbook is a material expression of the content of education’, and Perovsky (1955, cited in Kodliuk, p.2) defines it as ‘that which contains a systematic presentation of knowledge in a particular subject,

necessary for students to learn'. Charalambous et al. (2010) determined that textbooks are not merely reading material but also serve as vessels for conveying information and as pedagogical documents that organise language, sequence knowledge, construct values, and, therefore, shape children's relation to the world. The term 'textbook' here refers to a collection of educational resources used by educators in their daily educational activities, comprising student textbooks, workbooks and educators' guides (Son & Diletti, 2017). An analysis of textbook materials can examine the differences in the content provided to students and teachers, as well as how this content is presented (Silver, 2009).

Additionally, among the vast array of educational textbooks, I have chosen to focus on 'classic' textbooks, as these are pedagogical objects that have attained authority over a long period of time, have been repeatedly used, and have exerted a cultural influence; they are better able to reflect the core content and methods within a tradition that are deemed worthy of being passed on to children.

The choice of regions for comparison follows directly from my starting point. As a Chinese student studying in Europe, I observed differences primarily between Chinese and European (particularly British) students. Beyond the personal context, both China and Europe possess long-standing, deeply influential educational traditions that have produced foundational texts that have attained classic status. Consequently, I concluded that these two regions would offer meaningful contexts for analysing pedagogical representations in education within this thesis and would provide valuable insights into the pedagogical intentions and cultural traditions embedded in their respective educational texts.

In summary, this thesis is motivated by observed differences in the everyday classroom behaviours of European and Chinese students. This study does not regard these differences as immediate or self-evident cultural facts, but rather as phenomena shaped by history and education. Since classic textbooks offer a traceable

record of how educational traditions have shaped children's understanding of the world, they provide a productive starting point for this enquiry into some of the educational and cultural assumptions behind those differences. The next section establishes my rationale for selecting the two classic textbooks, among many others, used in Europe and China, as the basis for the comparison.

1.2. *Orbis Pictus* & Three Character Classic: Overview

I chose two classic educational texts as the primary objects of comparison. Czech educationist John Amos Comenius' *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* represents the European tradition, while the traditional Chinese classic *The Three Character Classic* represents the traditional Chinese classic. Both these texts have attained enduring status as foundational works in their respective traditions, and both were designed to introduce young learners to the world around them. The following section briefly overviews these two books, the current state of research on them, and the reasons for their selection, and I further elaborate my justification in Section 3.4.1.

1.2.1. The Orbis Sensualium Pictus

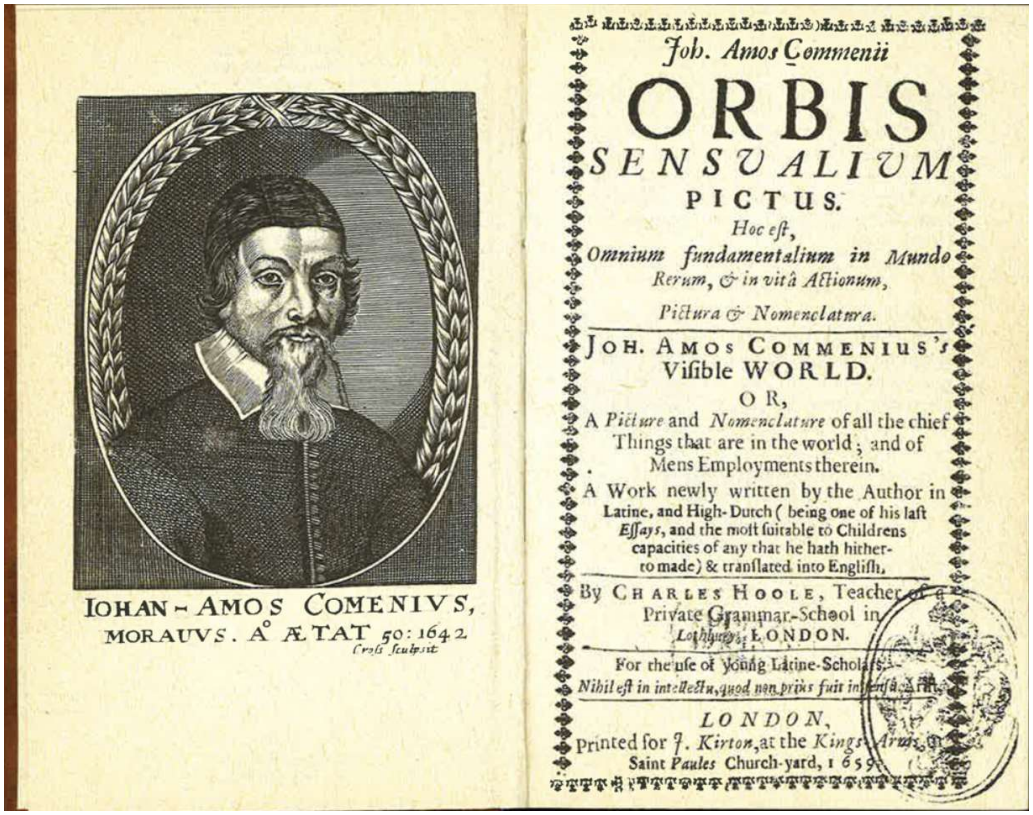
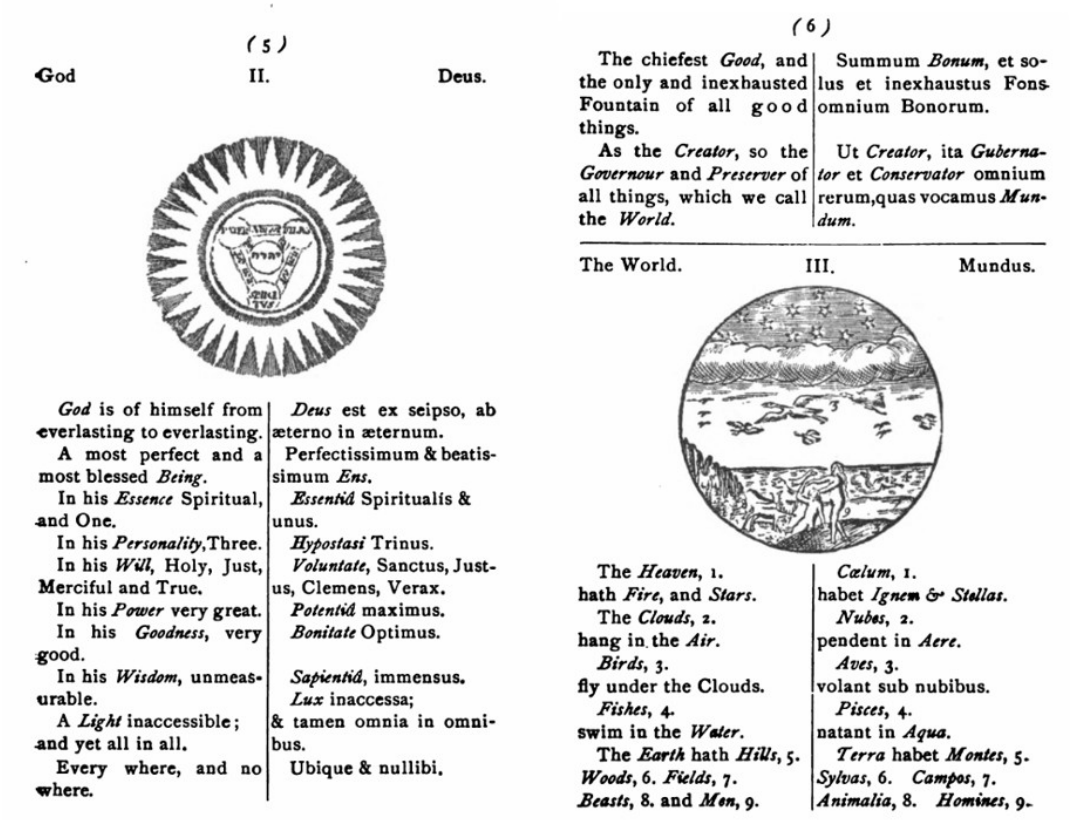


Figure 1: Title page of Orbis Pictus. https://www.abc-web.be/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/OrbisPictus.jpg (2026)

The first selected textbook is John Amos Comenius' *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (hereinafter referred to as *'Orbis Pictus',* see Figure 1), originally published in 1658, and C. W. Bardeen[1] (publisher of the 1887 version) characterised it as the first picture book designed specifically for children (Comenius, 1887). The first publication (1658) was in German and Latin, and it was subsequently reprinted in over 26 languages, with over 248 editions (Turner,1972). Its innovative approach to engaging young

[1] Charles William Bardeen (1847–1924) - American educational publisher in Syracuse, New York. His 1887 edition reproduces Charles Hoole's English translation in parallel Latin and English columns, with the engravings taken from the copperplates of the 1658 first edition, the version adopted here as the primary source for *Orbis Pictus*.

learners through visual media underscores the importance of interacting with printed materials (Murphy, 2009), and the work is recognised as a seminal milestone in the evolution of instructional technology, noted for its pivotal role in shaping modern educational tools and its revolutionary contribution to seventeenth-century language pedagogy (Woo, 2016). By the time *Orbis Pictus* was published, Comenius was in his 60s. Having spent most of his life shunted between countries and suffering through war and family tragedies (as detailed in Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.3.1), he never stopped composing his lifeworks. In 1989, in recognition of the unique and significant influence of *Orbis Pictus*, the Elementary Section of the National Council of Teachers of English established the '*Orbis Pictus Award*' to honour outstanding works of non-fiction for children (Crisp, 2015).



(5)

God II. Deus.

God is of himself from everlasting to everlasting. | *Deus* est ex seipso, ab æterno in æternum.
A most perfect and a most blessed *Being*. | Perfectissimum & beatissimum *Ens*.
In his *Essence* Spiritual, and One. | *Essentiâ* Spiritualis & unus.
In his *Personality*, Three. | *Hypostasi* Trinus.
In his *Will*, Holy, Just, Merciful and True. | *Voluntate*, Sanctus, Justus, Clemens, Verax.
In his *Power* very great. | *Potentiâ* maximus.
In his *Goodness*, very good. | *Bonitate* Optimus.
In his *Wisdom*, unmeasurable. | *Sapientiâ*, immensus.
A *Light* inaccessible; and yet all in all. | *Lux* inaccessa; & tamen omnia in omnibus.
Every where, and no where. | Ubique & nullibi.

(6)

The chiefest *Good*, and the only and inexhausted Fountain of all good things. | Summum *Bonum*, et solus et inexhaustus Fons omnium Bonorum.
As the *Creator*, so the *Governour* and *Preserver* of all things, which we call the *World*. | Ut *Creator*, ita *Gubernator* et *Conservator* omnium rerum, quas vocamus *Mundum*.

The World. III. Mundus.

The *Heaven*, 1. hath *Fire*, and *Stars*. | *Cælum*, 1. habet *Ignem & Stellas*.
The *Clouds*, 2. hang in the *Air*. | *Nubes*, 2. pendent in *Aere*.
Birds, 3. fly under the Clouds. | *Aves*, 3. volant sub nubibus.
Fishes, 4. swim in the *Water*. | *Pisces*, 4. natant in *Aqua*.
The *Earth* hath *Hills*, 5. *Woods*, 6. *Fields*, 7. *Beasts*, 8. and *Men*, 9. | *Terra* habet *Montes*, 5. *Sylvas*, 6. *Campos*, 7. *Animalia*, 8. *Homines*, 9.

Figure 2: A page from Comenius' Orbis Sensualium Pictus. Screenshot by the author from Comenius (1887, p. 5-6).

Orbis Pictus is a richly illustrated children's literacy textbook with a preface, main text with illustrations, and an index. In the preface, *Orbis Pictus* outlines guidance and simple, easy-to-follow methods that enable this illustrated textbook to be used as an extension of the classroom, such as for self-study, in-school learning, and parental counselling. The alphabet comes after the opening chapter of 'Invitatio' (based on the sounds made by a variety of animals and birds), and the last chapter, Close', bids farewell with blessings and wishes. The 151 chapters are structured with ordered images and explanations in Latin, English, and other languages, depending on the version (see Figure 2). These sections, including pictures and explanations, indicate Comenius' careful selection of the world, which he wished to present to the younger generation. The images and explanations provide readers with a perceivable space where children can develop a connection to understanding the world as described in Comenius's words, 'It is a little book […], yet a brief of the world, and a whole language' (2019, p. 4).

The text covers religion, nature, science, social life, politics, morality, and more, so that the purpose of language learning is not only to learn to speak two languages but also to acquire knowledge of the world as a whole, as I will further argue throughout this thesis. *Orbis Pictus,* thus*,* offers a view of Comenius' educational beliefs and teaching techniques, as well as his knowledge and artistic skills. Comenius's desire seems to be to use this book as an encyclopaedic guide to the world, for children to absorb information while simultaneously being fostered by beauty and developing the capacity to think in images. Moreover, children were expected to cultivate thinking habits along with the knowledge.

Orbis Pictus is considered an influential text in 17th-century European childhood education, integrating imagery, language, and the organisation of world knowledge and studied through varied lenses (described in Chapter 4), making it a particularly representative example of how the preceding generation in early modern Europe

presented knowledge of the world to children. Ren Zhongyin (2017) praised this all-encompassing book as both a children's picture book and a miniature children's encyclopaedia, as the texts cover almost all fields of knowledge from the sky, earth, animals, plants, and minerals in the natural world; production, politics, law, culture, education, military, and even all kinds of religions in social life; and the human being's own physical body and spirit. However, Woo argued that it wasn't just an encyclopaedia but also Comenius's theological representation or a 'pan-pedagogical call to a religious educational mission' (2015, p. 215).

In the next section, I introduce the classic Chinese textbook, *The Three Character Classic,* and then explain the rationale for choosing and comparing the two.

1.2.2. *The Three Character Classic*



Figure 3: Screen Capture of The Three Character Classic from https://ctext.org/three-character-classic/ens.

The Three Character Classic is traditionally attributed to Wang Yinglin of the Song Dynasty (although there are controversies on authorship, elaborated in Sec 5.1.3.1). It was likely compiled around the late 13th Century. The text, along with the *Hundred Family Surnames* and *Thousand Character Classic*[2], formed the core trilogy of elementary education in China.

The Three Character Classic[3] comprises 86 verses (most of which use rhyme, as explained in detail in Sec. 5.2.3.1), in which every three Chinese characters form a sentence and every four sentences form a verse, as illustrated in Figure 3. The layout of *The Three Character Classic* shares a standard feature with many literary texts of the same period: the sentences are short and neat, the four tones are clear, and the single-syllable words are easy to read. Even for very young children or those beginning to learn to read, words are easy to recognise and comprehend quickly. Usually, students first learn to read and recite the entire sentence, then understand it through repeated reading, and finally read and comprehend its words. This learning mechanism fully accounts for the characteristics of Chinese characters and the learning habits of young learners, thereby optimising the effective and efficient use and exercise of memory in learning (Zhao, 2011). In addition, this book covers various content areas, including history, geography, and philosophy, which can be used for

[2] The Thousand Character Classic is the earliest, attributed to Zhou Xingsi (周興嗣, d. 521) at the Liang court of Emperor Wu, and built from one thousand distinct, non-repeating characters arranged in 250 rhymed four-character lines.

The Hundred Family Surnames is an anonymous early Northern Song compilation (tenth century): a rhymed enumeration of surnames carrying no continuous sense, opening with Zhào (趙) in deference to the reigning imperial house, the feature on which its conventional dating rests.

[3] The version of *the Three Character Classic* used for reference in this thesis is taken from the website https://ctext.org/three-character-classic/ens

different educational purposes, and has been widely recognised for promoting the importance of education and the meaning of life (Zhao, 2011).

As an influential primer of early childhood education in Chinese history, integrating literacy, morality, history, and cultural norms, *The Three Character Classic* provides a valuable perspective on traditional Chinese educational beliefs and pedagogical techniques under the feudal system (Zhao, 2011; Zheng, 2017). Although this text is not limited to literacy instruction, its rhythmic structure (three characters per line) makes it particularly well-suited to recitation and early reading. It also introduces children to moral principles, family relationships, historical knowledge, role models, and the cultural norms expected by society. In this sense, *The Three Character Classic* seems to have been designed to convey a wide range of knowledge and values through brief, rhythmic, and memorable lines to young learners.

Thus, *The Three Character Classic* may be considered an important first book for children entering traditional Chinese elementary education, as it has circulated since around the 13th century. *The Three Character Classic* has remained in use for centuries, making it a particularly representative example of the tradition this thesis sets out to examine and is therefore particularly well-suited for this PhD thesis to analyse how traditional Chinese culture uses concise texts to impart knowledge and norms to children.

1.2.3. Justification for Choosing the Above Texts

As mentioned above, both *Orbis Pictus* and *Three Character Classic* share characteristics essential to the introductory education of children and are classic examples of curated representations of the world. In this section, I justify their inclusion and comparison as a research gap worthy of study.

1.2.3.1. Current Research on *Orbis Pictus*

Given the rich content *of Orbis Pictus* and its popularity in education at the time, the academic community has devoted considerable enthusiasm to its study. Since its first publication in 1658, *Orbis Pictus* has been reedited and republished numerous times. These include Josef Chmela's 1833 multilingual edition, the 1887 C. W. Bardeen edition of *The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius*, the 1910 Johannes Kühnel edition published by Julius Klinkhardt, and the 1941 Josef Hendrich edition, *Orbis pictus = Svět v obrazích*. In addition to these editions, Sadler's *J. A. Comenius and the Concept of Universal Education*, originally published in 1966 and later reissued by Routledge, provides a broader interpretation of Comenius' educational philosophy.

In his article, Capková (1970) argues that Comenius's pedagogical approach can be discerned in his method of selecting concepts and facts from the entirety of reality and human knowledge; this pansophical system (elaborated in Section 4.1.3) holds significant value and practical relevance for establishing and defining curriculum frameworks, as well as determining the teaching content of specific subjects. At the same time, he claims that *Orbis Pictus* serves as a textbook exemplar that embodies certain principles conducive to the holistic development of children's personalities (Capková, 1970).

Kully (2005) attempted to interpret the language and representations in Comenius's *Orbis Pictus* using Foucault's definition of a grammar system[4] that is seen as a civilising device for humans to understand their objective relationship with nature and society, to take control of their environment, and to interact with others in a way that benefits

[4] Foucault (1970) situates 'general grammar' within the Classical episteme, the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century order of knowledge in which language operated as a transparent system of representation, arranging words to mirror the things they named.

society. However, he ultimately concluded that whilst Comenius sought to organise the world into a named and comprehensible order through images, text and numbered notes, he nevertheless placed great importance on children's direct experience of things themselves and hoped to strike a balance between 'order' and 'things' in their understanding (Kully, 2005, p. 94).

Mollenhauer (2014) notes that the individual objects and activities presented in *Orbis pictus* are not merely isolated items to be named for language instruction but form a pedagogically ordered representation of the wider world (which will also be discussed in detail in the following chapters of this thesis). For Mollenhauer, *Orbis Pictus* is an important historical example of pedagogical representation, illustrating that when the world becomes too complex for children to understand through everyday life alone, it must be represented to them in a filtered and systematically organised form. In this sense, Mollenhauer states that *Orbis Pictus* 'symbolises the birth of modern education', as it marks a change in 'the underlying dilemma for education', that is, from how a way of life can be represented to children so that they can take it on as their own, to 'how we can design the hall of mirrors of schooling so that children will learn what they should learn and in the proper manner' (Mollenhauer, 2014, p. 46).

Spicer (2019) further suggested that *Orbis Pictus* advocates an experiential approach to education, rather than traditional rote learning and memorisation.

Meanwhile, Chinese academia has also conducted extensive research into the educational philosophies embodied in Comenius' *Orbis Pictus*. For instance, Wang (2023) explored the implications of Comenius' natural education philosophy for mathematics education; Zhang and Qian (2024) investigated the insights offered by Comenius' principle of simplicity for primary Chinese language teaching; Jiang and Xiao (2024) sought to apply Comenius' principle of convenience in primary Chinese language teaching, while Fu (2024) articulated his interpretation of Comenius' positions on several key educational issues in his research; Zhang & Ma (2023)

proposed insights from Comenius' natural education philosophy for contemporary primary moral education.

1.2.3.2. Current Research on *The Three Character Classic*

The Three Character Classic is based on allusions and knowledge compiled under the guidance of Confucian thought. It spread widely and has endured, becoming one of the most influential children's educational materials across Chinese dynasties[5] . By the Qing Dynasty (1636-1912 CE), it had become the primary textbook for children preparing for the imperial examinations through in-house and home schooling (Han, 2016). It was also introduced outside China as early as the 16th century (Xu & Lu, 2009). During the Edo period[6] (1603-1868), *the Three Character Classic* began to spread in Japan and was popularised mainly through readings. From the Edo period to the early Meiji period (1868-1912), the book reached its peak in private school education (Han, 2016). In the early 18th century, the Russian government sent many students and missionary teams to China to study the culture, which led to the creation of a Russian handwritten version of *The Three Character Classic.* For example, Robert Morrison (1782-1834), the first Western missionary to China, published his

[5] *The Three Character Classic* is thought to have emerged in the late Southern Song Dynasty or the transition from the Song to the Yuan Dynasty. It underwent continuous annotation and revision thereafter and, by the Ming and Qing Dynasties, had become a widely popular primer for children. For a visual timeline for all main dynasties, see website: https://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/timeline.htm

[6] The Edo period (Japanese: 江戸時代, *Edo jidai*), c. 1603–1868, was the era of Japanese history during which the country was governed by the Tokugawa shogunate from the city of Edo (present-day Tokyo).

Chronicles of China in English in 1812, which included *The Three Character Classic (三字经) and The Great Learning (大学)*.

By the beginning of the 20th century, several English translations of *The Three Character Classic* had emerged in China and beyond. Some of the more renowned translations include the editions by Elijah Coleman Bridgman (1801-1861), Ernest John Eitel (1838-1908), and Herbert Allen Giles (1845-1935) (Zheng, 2009). Among these translations, Morrison's translation did not include the Chinese text of *The Three Character Classic* alongside the English, opting instead to preserve the Chinese pronunciation of proper nouns and combining them with annotations to explain their meanings. Bridgman's translation, likewise, omitted the Chinese text of *The Three Character Classic*, whilst Eitel and Giles employed a bilingual format. Whilst Morrison utilised a few footnotes, Bridgman's translation appended English annotations to the text, Eitel employed extensive explanatory commentary with only one footnote, and Giles' translation provided detailed annotations for every character of the original Chinese text (Han, 2016). The annotated editions of *The Three Character Classic* produced by scholars, primarily foreign missionaries, predominantly employed a method of translation and interpretation that involved providing parallel explanations of the original text's meaning.

Over time, translation activities for *The Three Character Classic* flourished among Chinese scholars within the country. Some notable versions of the English translation of *The Three Character Classic* are Wang Baotong and Li Li's *The Three Primer & The Kiloword (1991);* Ma Zhichou's *The Three-Character Primer (2011) (San Zi Jing with History Introduction);* Professor Zhao Yanchun's *The Three Word Primer (2017);* and *Tales from The Three Character Classic* by Yu Hui and translated by Martha Avery (2010). These four scholarly editions vary in their approaches to translation; specifically, they use literal or interpretative renderings, consider rhyming schemes, and include necessary annotations to elucidate personal names or historical

narratives. Beyond these variations, all editions primarily use modern Chinese to interpret and annotate *The Three Character Classic*, as it has been transmitted over the ages.

In addition to the above translations, academics have also explored the educational and pedagogical significance of *The Three Character Classic* from diverse perspectives. For instance, Han Dongfang (2016)'s research on *the International Dissemination of the traditional Chinese Primer The Three-Character Classic* focuses on how it has been transmitted and received beyond China, exploring the channels and contexts and, as part of broader efforts to promote Chinese culture globally. Fang Shuqi (2016)'s study on *the Prosodic and Phonological analysis* discusses the sound level features like rhythm, tone and metre of *The Three Character Classic*. Chen Lin (2019)'s investigation into *Developing Children's Endogenous Ability of Life Meaning* investigates how moral and philosophical content can be applied to cultivate inner motivation and a child's capacity to construct meaning through *The Three Character Classic*. Similarly, Zhang Dan's (2018) study of *the Cultural Dimension of Ancient Enlightenment Textbooks in China* explores the cultural values, historical knowledge, and worldviews embedded in ancient educational texts and how they function as transmitters of Chinese identity.

1.2.3.3. Research Gap and Rationale for Comparison

Overall, *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* are both influential classics in the history of children's education, and each fulfils the same fundamental pedagogical function: representing the world to the younger generation within its respective tradition, although they use different languages, describe different content, and were used at different times. Indeed, since they share the idea of pedagogical representation, the two books are well worth comparing and studying. Furthermore, while *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* have received considerable

scholarly attention individually, no systematic comparative study of the two works within the field of education has been identified. Such a comparison is particularly timely given a growing interest in cross-cultural approaches to education. The closest approximation is Jiang (2019), who examined Kongzi 孔子[7] and Comenius together, seeking to demonstrate how their ideas on moral education could serve as an important foundation for contemporary theories of moral education. Jiang (2019) argues that although Kongzi and Comenius belong to different cultural traditions, both offer significant insights into what kind of person one ought to become and how education can shape them.

While Jiang's (2019) work offers a valuable starting point, this thesis develops a more rigorous, systematic textual analysis to examine and compare the two selected educational texts, focusing on the pedagogical intentions embedded in them. This thesis intends to address the gap in the existing scholarship by raising, and offering an answer to the following question: What do *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* intend to present to young learners? For now, the next section considers the significant contribution to discourse that addressing this question could make.

1.3. Research Objectives

This study thus aims to explore, through conceptual textual analysis, how the aforementioned classic educational works construct the pedagogical content structures, or particular representations of the world, that their respective texts sought to establish and the historical, cultural, and philosophical reasons underlying

[7] Kongzi 孔子, commonly known in English as Confucius. This thesis adopts Hanyu Pinyin as the standard for the transcription of Chinese personal names and terms, and this system will be used consistently throughout. The same principle is applied to other figures, such as Mengzi 孟子, commonly known in English as Mencius, etc.,

those choices. This research focuses on the educational philosophy embedded within the textual characteristics and formal structures of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, foregrounding the educator's intentionality and perspective rather than examining classroom practices or learner reception. In other words, it analyses the potential messages that these two classic textbooks are intended to convey to their readers. The adopted conceptual understanding of education and the research method are further elaborated in Chapters 2 and 3, respectively.

1.4. Contribution of this Research

Although *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* are both widely recognised and highly representative works in the history of children's education, they have rarely been brought into direct comparison. A systematic comparison, therefore, would significantly add to educational scholarship, and by undertaking such a comparison, this thesis fills that gap. Furthermore, by focusing on how each work constructs children's relations with sound, word, discourse, action, and the world order, this thesis also contributes to the field of pedagogical interpretation of these two texts.

Theoretically, the analytical framework combining hermeneutics (Schleiermacher, 1998) (Sec. 3.3), the 5W1H pedagogical questions analytical framework (Uljens, 2004) (Sec. 3.2) and Freiberger's five-stage comparative model (2019) (Sec. 3.4.3) could also be understood as a methodological contribution that other cross-cultural textual analyses could adopt. By bridging European and Chinese educational artefacts, this thesis contributes to the cross-cultural and comparative history of education. The discussion now turns to the outline of the research.

1.5. Outline of the Research

This thesis is organised as follows:

Chapter 1 (this chapter) introduces the rationale for the thesis, followed by an overview of the chosen texts, research contribution, and the research outline.

Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical and literature framework for this thesis, focusing on the conceptual framework of education and its essential elements of the educational process, an exploration of the idea of textbooks, and concludes by presenting the research questions that arise from this discussion.

Chapter 3 provides the methodology utilised in this research and explicates how to use the hermeneutic and the 5W1H analytical framework (who, whom, what relation, into what, why and how) to interpret the two selected textbooks. It then introduces how to use the comparative approach (Freiberger's five-fold comparative) to analyse the similarities and differences between the two books.

Chapters 4 and 5 interpret *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, along with the methodology introduced in Chapter 3, specifically in the following sequence: Firstly, the historical and cultural background, such as the time and institutions in which the book was produced and used by educators is introduced, followed by a brief clarification about the book's author. Then, in accordance with the definition of education utilised in this thesis, which holds that these two books are used to improve students' relations with something, the main points of analysis and comparison reflect the educator's educational intention (Kenklies, 2019; Lewin, 2018; Friesen & Osguthorpe, 2018). Therefore, I have identified five improvable relations (students' relation with sound, word, discourse, action, world order[8]) among the various possible relations for each book. In the order of the 5W1H questions, these relations

[8] In the following analysis and comparison of these five 'improvable relations', the specific terminology used may vary slightly in order to accurately reflect the linguistic and cultural differences of the respective texts; however, it is clear that they still fall into these five broad categories, which should not affect understanding.

are examined in detail, providing a general understanding of each book's use for educational purposes.

Chapter 6 places *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* in a comparative discussion of the five improvable relations, adopting Freiberger's five-fold model, examining their similarities and differences across these relations, and then reflecting on and clarifying the central findings from the analysis and comparison of the two books.

Chapter 7 draws together the thesis's findings and reflects on its methodological choices, limitations, and the broader implications of the comparison for our understanding of educational traditions in Europe and China.

1.6. Conclusion

This chapter has established the rationale for comparing *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* as the primary objects of the research. Beginning with observed differences in classroom behaviour, I propose that such differences could be understood not as immediate cultural facts but as phenomena shaped by history and educational tradition. Classic textbooks, as deliberate and enduring records of pedagogical intention, thus offer a productive means of examining those traditions. Although both texts have attracted substantial scholarly attention, no systematic comparative study of the two within the field of education has been identified. The next chapter turns from why these texts are worth studying to the conceptual ground on which they can be analysed, developing a relational conception of education, exploring the textbooks as the artefact through which educational intention is materialised, and leading to the research question of this thesis.

2. Theoretical Framework: Education, Representation, and the Textbook

Having established the importance of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* and the need for a comparative study in the previous chapter (Chapter 1), this chapter focuses on setting the theoretical scope and assumptions. As this thesis does not engage in purely literary comparison nor focus solely on linguistic forms but rather aims to identify the educational elements and pedagogical relations implicit in the pedagogical intention of the two books, it requires a viable theory of education to generate a set of analytical categories. The chapter first describes my understanding of education and how the use of textbooks as pedagogical artefacts helps in the historical understanding of education. Finally, I elaborate on the research questions guiding the research.

2.1. What is Education?

Education is a broad and multifaceted concept, and depending on the research stakeholders, understanding and determining its meaning, functionality and processes vary. The English word ‘education’ is etymologically (see Figure 4) understood to come from the Latin word ‘educare’, which means ‘to bring up or train' (Harper, n.d.). The term originally denoted instructions in social etiquette and customs, whereas its current definition of ‘systematic education and training for work’ emerged in the 1710s (Harper, n.d.). It implies a process of leading or bringing forth something potential in an individual.



Figure 4: Illustrated explanation of the root of the word education, reproduced from https://www.etymonline.com/word/education

In this context, ‘educare’ suggests facilitating growth, development, and the unfolding of human potential (Harper, n.d.). Combining these components, ‘education’ can be seen as a process that involves leading out or bringing forth the latent capabilities and potential within individuals, and it carries a positive charge of enrichment, empowerment, and development. It’s not just about transferring knowledge but also about nurturing intellectual, social, and personal growth.



Figure 5: The printed equivalent of the word 'education' in the Chinese context. (Author-generated)

The Chinese term that is equivalent to 'education' in Mandarin is '教学'[9]. According to Changzhi Chen's (2013) etymological explanation of this word, '教', referring to 'teaching', means the words and deeds of superiors make demonstrations for subordinates; '学', referring to 'enlightenment through learning', originally written as '斆' in traditional Mandarin, means one can only know they are ignorant when they start to learn (see Figure 5). When they acknowledge their shortcomings, they begin to reflect, and when they reflect, they begin to improve themselves (Chen, 2013). Accordingly, '教' focuses on imparting and receiving, and '斆' focuses on inner feelings, while the two actions occur and interact with each other in synchrony; '教学', to a large extent, refers to a pedagogical activity in which teachers guide students to promote their physical and mental development to help students understand the objective world. Here, teaching and learning are simultaneous and mutually constitutive.

The etymological explanations provide a glimpse of how different cultures understand the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through structured,

[9] There are many choices for the equivalent Chinese word of 'education', because the term 'education' itself has many meanings. I choose to use the term '教学' out of my own consideration as I intend to follow the definition of 'education' as a pedagogical process shown in this thesis.

systematic methods. For some, it is a deliberate and organised effort to facilitate the instructional process, typically carried out in formal institutions such as schools, colleges, and universities; for others, it could focus on the enlightenment of the learner. Both traditions conceive of education as oriented towards the development of something present in the learners; however, the Latin etymology foregrounds the educator's outward action, and the Chinese compound foregrounds the learner's inner movement and places the dynamic between the teacher and learner at the centre of the educational relationship. The difference is not just linguistic but points towards assumptions about education, which, as this thesis will argue, impact the two classic texts under review.

Beyond linguistic differences, the concept of education is equally contested. Peters (1966, p. 45) identified three criteria implicit in education. They were (i) that 'education' implies the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to it; (ii) that 'education' must involve knowledge and understanding and some kind of cognitive perspective, which are not inert; and (iii) that 'education' at least rules out some procedures of transmission, on the grounds that they lack willingness and voluntariness. For Peters, education was not simply a process of influence but one that respects the learner as a conscious participant. Dewey (1963), in contrast, emphasised the importance of experience in education and argued that education should be a continuous reconstruction of experience, foregrounding its social dimensions rather than purely intellectual ones. Paulo Freire (2018) suggests that education should not be a one-way transfer of knowledge from teacher to student but rather a dialogical interaction involving teachers and students for a two-way learning experience, emphasising the importance of empowering students, arguing that education should not only transmit information but also foster critical consciousness and that it plays a central role in empowering individuals and promoting social change.

Chinese scholarship on education reflects a similar tension between transmission and transformation (Fan, 2019), though it is framed within different cultural and institutional assumptions; it does seem to centre 'learning', 'teacher', and 'politics' as its core (Tan, 2018). Chen defines education as 'the process of intentionally passing on the cultural heritage of the previous generation and the accumulated knowledge, value, and skills to the next generation through schools, adult education institutions, and other organised media at all levels' (Chen, 1982, as cited in Fan, 2019). This definition foregrounds intergenerational transmission, situating the educator as a bearer of cultural inheritance that must be passed on. A joint macro definition by 12 universities defined 'education as a practical activity that promotes the socialisation of individuals and the individualisation of society under a certain social background' (JCKNUC, 2002, p. 4), shifting the emphasis from what is passed to the reciprocal relation between the individual and social world. The tension between education as transmission and education as active formation of individuals is evident.

Across both traditions is a shared understanding of education as an intentional and socially embedded process concerned not merely with the transfer of information but with shaping the learner's relationship to knowledge, to others, and to the world. Whether the emphasis falls on the transmission of cultural heritage, the reconstruction of experience, the fostering of critical consciousness, or the reciprocal formation of individual and society, these perspectives share a common orientation that education is purposeful, relational, and directed toward some conception of human flourishing or social participation. Consequently, the differences between these traditions also reflect distinct assumptions about where the energy of education resides, what counts as worthwhile knowledge, and what kind of person education is intended to produce. These shared orientations and underlying differences make cross-cultural comparison of educational traditions both possible and illuminating and motivate the relational definition of education adopted in this thesis.

Thus, the guiding definition of education for this project can be understood as a process that improves the relation between the individual and the world with the intentional support of the teacher (Kenklies, 2019; Lewin, 2018; Friesen & Osguthorpe, 2018). In this process, there are three key factors: the teacher, the student, and something with which the student has a relation (content), which forms a solid 'pedagogical triangle' (Friesen & Osguthorpe, 2018; see Figure 6). For the purposes of this thesis, education is understood as the intentional human activity that aspires to 'change and improve the relations' a person has with her/himself, with other people, with everything in the world and with the world in general (Kenklies, 2020, p. 618). As an integral part of our daily life and culture, it is a process that occurs among people worldwide, with the goal of improving the relation between people and the world. A necessary condition is that the teacher has an intention to improve students' relation with certain aspects of the world.

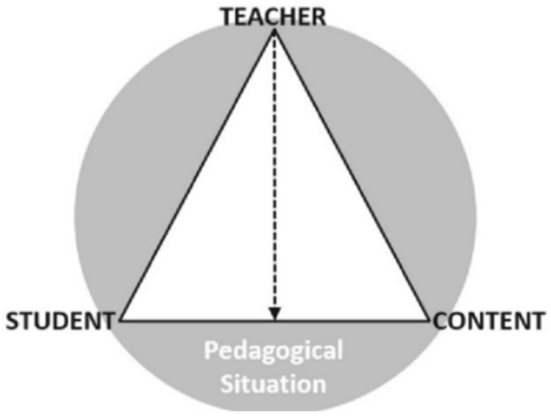


Figure 6: The pedagogical triangle (Friesen & Osguthorpe, 2018)

The above figure (see Figure 6) illustrates the pedagogical triangle, which visually captures the three essential elements of any educational situation. The teacher, the student, the content, and the relations between them are all situated within the broader pedagogical context of time, place, and circumstance. Its central insight, represented by the dotted line at the triangle's core, is that the teacher's role is not simply to transmit content but to alter or improve the relation between the student

and the content; this understanding of education provides the analytical foundation for this thesis.

Of the various conceptions, the above understanding and representation is most appropriate for three reasons. It is sufficiently abstract to apply across historical and cultural contexts. It foregrounds intentionality, which is central to analysing texts designed to educate. It also frames education in terms of relations between the learner and the world rather than in terms of theories and linguistics, which means it generates analytical questions that can be asked of any pedagogical text, regardless of its origins. Chapter 3 further develops this into a practical analytical framework for interpreting and comparing the two selected texts.

2.2. Education as Pedagogical Representation

This relational understanding of education can be further specified through Mollenhauer's concept of the pedagogical representation of the world, which discusses his ideas on the pedagogical relation between children and adults (Mollenhauer, 2014). According to him, a child's awareness of the world begins with knowing the things and facts around them, some of which can be learned and understood through direct contact and experience, while others cannot. As social realities become increasingly complex, children are unable to experience the whole world through direct experience alone. Therefore, parents and caregivers must 'select from a vast array of material and convey it to the young person in an understandable form' (Mollenhauer, 2014, p. 10). However, it is difficult to remain entirely impartial when making such choices, as they inevitably involve considerations held by the older generation, such as what content is worth passing on and how it should be passed on, and are therefore influenced by the cultural assumptions and values of that generation.

Mollenhauer's concept of pedagogical representation is particularly important, as it specifies what constitutes the 'content' corner of the pedagogical triangle. Here, it is not a neutral body of information but a deliberate selection from the complexity of the world. This selection could be knowledge, social relationships and world order from one generation to the next. It is through such selections that educators guide youngsters in establishing their relationships in the world. This understanding connects the present thesis to a longer tradition of pedagogical questioning. When asked to identify the central concern of his life's work, Mollenhauer returned to a question first posed by Schleiermacher: What does the older generation want with the younger? (Mollenhauer, 1991, p. 85, as cited in Friesen, 2014, p. xviii).

Here, it is necessary to distinguish between 'presentation' and 'representation' as proposed by Mollenhauer. For Mollenhauer, 'presentation' refers to the fundamental and inevitable process by which adults, simply by living with children, convey to them their way of life and the values they uphold (Mollenhauer, 2014, p. 10). In this sense, children encounter a way of life that is already rooted in particular cultural and historical contexts. 'Representation' arises as a further pedagogical problem when an increasingly complex social reality can no longer be made accessible to children through their everyday experience alone. Consequently, adults and educational institutions must select from the broader social and cultural world what should be conveyed and make it accessible to children in an understandable form, for example, by organising and mediating certain aspects of that world through specific educational formats—including images, texts, books, and school education (Mollenhauer, 2014, pp. 34–35). Although, as Friesen (2014, p. xxxviii) explains, one does not necessarily or completely exclude the other, 'presentation' and 'representation' should not be understood as entirely mutually exclusive concepts. In analysing the two texts in this thesis, I primarily use the notion of 'representation' to refer to the pedagogical selection and organisation of aspects of the world in ways that make them accessible to the younger generation.

Significantly, Mollenhauer himself regarded *Orbis Pictus* as a key historical example illustrating the true forms that educational representation takes in practice (Friesen, 2014). As a published children's picture book, *Orbis Pictus* introduces children to the world through 151 themes, ranging from nature and human activities to social relationships and moral virtues, each illustrated, labelled with numbers, and accompanied by bilingual descriptions. As Friesen (2014, p. xxxv) points out, one of the fundamental issues this book highlights is 'what to represent to children, what to leave out, and how to order it'. For Friesen, these issues have long been at the heart of the debate over textbook content, exemplifying differing views on the values and lifestyles that the curriculum should reflect.

By juxtaposing *Orbis Pictus* with *The Three Character Classic* (two classic educational texts originating from traditions with vastly different cultural backgrounds), this thesis further expands upon this line of inquiry, exploring how each text constructs its own unique mode of representation, and how such a comparison reveals the distinct worldviews that different civilisations deem worthy of passing on to future generations. Before beginning the formal analysis and comparison of these two books, the next section explains why textbooks are particularly effective at revealing a culture's representational choices across all available historical evidence, and why this research focuses primarily on classic textbooks.

2.3. Textbooks as Pedagogical and Historical Artefacts

Having established a relational conception of education as the theoretical foundation, the next question is, what kinds of evidence reveal how that conception was enacted in practice? Education has many forms of traceable artefacts, such as institutional records, curriculum documents, accounts of classroom practice, physical learning environments, and written texts. Each of these offers a partial glimpse into the

educational past, but not all are equally accessible or equally revealing of pedagogical intention. What position, then, do textbooks occupy among these?

While historians broadly agree that books have served educational purposes for as long as organised schooling has existed, their function has changed considerably. In late medieval and early modern England, the first texts were often hornbooks, which were single wooden paddles or pages bearing the alphabet, basic syllables, and the Lord's Prayer, used as a foundational literacy tool (Tuer, 1896). There were also primers which combined the alphabet with prayers and moral maxims reflecting the close entanglement of literacy and religion. In traditional China, the first book children read is usually called *Mengxue Duwu (蒙学读物)*, or textbooks for young children, such as *The Three Character Classic* (三字经) and *A Hundred Family Names* (百家姓). These textbooks were not only used to teach children linguistic skills, including reading and writing, but are also rich in cultural content, such as moral allusions and historical stories (Han, 2016). Interestingly, texts from the Song dynasty onward also seem to serve an additional function of moral development, 'predominantly instilling Neo-Confucian principles, concepts, and practices' (Ngo & Ngo, 2025, p. 1). According to Ngo & Ngo (2025, p. 10), these textbooks are generally structured around 'activities of daily life, such as leisure and attire'. These textbooks are authored not simply for the child's amusement but are also shaped by myriad educational concerns, including inherited theories about the aims of education and the nature of children's development.

Across both traditions, textbooks serve purposes well beyond the simple transmission of information. Understanding what those purposes are and how they are encoded in the design of educational texts requires treating textbooks not merely as historical objects but as pedagogical artefacts worthy of systemic analysis. As Stray (1994) argues, textbooks as cultural artefacts both reflect and reproduce the educational cultures that produced them, and their significance as historical evidence lies not only

in their content but in their form and in the choices made about how knowledge is organised, presented, and addressed to the learner. These formal choices are themselves expressions of pedagogical intention and are often more revealing than the text's explicit content.

Friesen (2013) describes the textbook as an evolving pedagogical form that combines text, image, and what he calls simulated oral interaction to produce a specific kind of didactic experience through the structuring of the material, typographical organisation, and visual design that positions the reader as an active participant and guides the reader's attention. This observation is particularly relevant to the present research, which is concerned not only with what each text teaches but also with how it constructs and represents the world to learners through the educator's guidance. If education is understood as the intentional improvement of relations, textbooks become the instrument through which that intention is given a stable, transmissible form.

Among the wide range of possible texts, this thesis focuses on texts that have attained classical status. A classic educational text is one that has accumulated authority over time through repeated use and has lasting influence. Classic textbooks, therefore, both record past educational intentions and continue to pose questions about what education is, what the world is, and what the relationship between learner and world should be.

With the above theoretical positioning, understanding education as an intentional, relational process of representing the world to the next generation, and textbooks as artefacts through which this presentation and representation are materialised, it becomes possible to formulate specific questions this thesis seeks to answer. The two texts for this research are *Orbis Pictus* and *Three Character Classic*, and their historical and biographical contexts, as well as their educational and philosophical interpretations, will be used to answer the research questions outlined below.

2.4. Research Questions

As mentioned in Section 1.3, this study aims to determine how two classic educational works construct the pedagogical content structures, that is, representations of the world, that their respective texts sought to establish, and the historical, cultural and philosophical reasons underlying those choices. Framed through Mollenhauer's (2014) notion of representing the world to the younger generation, the question asked in Section 1.2.3.3 can now be stated with greater precision. The core research question of this thesis is the following:

How do the educational traditions embodied in *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* imagine the task of representing the world to the younger generation?

To answer the core research question outlined above, the following sub-questions will be developed progressively throughout the thesis. These are:

1.1 What pedagogical elements does each text construct, and what intentions do these reflect within their respective educational traditions?

1.2 What are the key similarities and differences between the two texts in their construction of pedagogical intentions and relations, and how can these be accounted for by their respective historical and cultural contexts?

1.3 What does this comparison contribute to our understanding of how distinct educational traditions have conceived the task of introducing the world to the younger generation?

2.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter established a relational and intentional conception of education and identified textbooks as the artefacts that materialise this intention by

representing a particular vision of the world to the next generation. Having established the theoretical underpinning, the next chapter translates this theoretical base into an analytical framework that I will systematically apply to *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* and outlines the method by which the research questions outlined above will be answered.

3. Methodology

Chapter 2 established a relational definition of education which the educator intentionally improves the relation between the learner and a particular object or some aspect of the world, represented through the pedagogical triangle of teacher, student and content (Friesen & Osguthorpe, 2018) and further specified through Mollenhauer's (2014) notion of representing the world to the next generation. While the triangle identifies the core elements of any educational situation, it does not yet provide a set of questions that can be systematically applied to analyse and compare *Orbis Pictus* and *Three Character Classic*. This chapter now establishes the required methodological framework.

This chapter first sets out the nature and scope of the research, then develops the analytical framework by adapting Uljens's (2004) didactic model into 5W1H questions. I then introduce hermeneutics (Schleiermacher, 1998) as the method of interpretation and understanding throughout the whole research process. Section 3.4 turns to the comparative methodology, examining the existing literature on the comparative method and adopting Freiberger's (2019) comparative framework as the best-suited framework for this conceptual, cross-cultural comparison of two traditional texts. Section 3.5 integrates these three components (the 5W1H framework, hermeneutics, and the comparative model) as the methodological framework for this thesis. I then close with research data and sources, the significance of this research, and limitations and considerations, followed by the conclusion.

The next section first clarifies the nature and scope of the research.

3.1. The Nature and Scope of the Research

This research is primarily a conceptual investigation aimed at exploring what educators sought to convey to the younger generation through *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*. It employs a cross-cultural, non-empirical approach to educational research (Zimmermann, 2015), analysing two classic traditional textbooks, *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, to understand the educational intentions embedded within them. The focus of this study is not on how these texts are received by learners or used in practical classrooms, but rather on what their authors sought to convey and how these intentions are reflected in the form and content of each text.

One point must be made clear at the outset: whether one can fully comprehend ideas expressed hundreds of years ago is itself open to debate. As Forster (2018) observes, an interpretation grounded in the reader's own perspective and experience is inevitable, yet the author's original intent must still be respected; Gadamer (2013), however, goes a step further, arguing that the author's original intent can never be fully reconstructed. This study faces precisely this tension: in attempting to analyse the intentions of the two authors through textual analysis, I am inevitably influenced by my own cultural and educational background. Consequently, this study consistently adopts a reflexive stance, acknowledging the inherent limitations of cross-linguistic and cross-tradition research, seeking an understanding that is reasoned and adequately supported by the text whilst also reflecting on my role as a Chinese postgraduate student within the European academic framework.

The specific methods employed in this study for the interpretative and comparative work are outlined in the following sections, beginning with a discussion of the research's analytical framework.

3.2. The Analytical Framework: From the Pedagogical Triangle to the 5W1H Questions

Michael Uljens (2004, p. 16) offers a useful starting point with his didactic model observing that 'In teaching, there is always somebody (who?) that teaches somebody else (whom?) some subject matter (what?) in some way (how?) some time (when?) somewhere (where?) for some reason (why?) towards some goal (which?)'. For Uljens, these questions represent the essential dimensions that a pedagogical process may contain and analysing a pedagogical situation means attending to each of them in turn (2004). The Uljens questions also connect to my understanding of education as established in Section 2.1, and because this research asks about what the educators intended to convey, Uljens questions capture that intention systematically across the two texts.

Thus, building on Uljens' model and drawing on the relational understanding of education, this thesis adapts these questions into a framework suited to the analysis of textual artefacts. Specifically, this study situates each text within the context of a specific time and place (when? where?) and examines the essential pedagogical questions, such as in what way (how?) the educator (who?) with a specific intention (why?) to improve/change the learner's (whom?) relation (what relation) with a particular object towards a specific goal (into what)?

Together, these questions constitute the core elements for analysing the contextual background and pedagogical content of each book. The first two elements, when and where, are contextual questions that apply to each text as a whole. The remaining six, including who, whom, what, into what, how and why (hereinafter referred to as the 5W1H framework), concern the pedagogical relations constructed within the text. Before analysing the book with each core element, it is necessary to understand why these elements are important and exactly what they refer to; therefore, the following

section analyses each element in turn, explaining what it refers to and why it matters for the analysis of the two texts.

3.2.1. Contextual Elements

Having outlined the framework's dimensions, this section examines each element, explaining what it refers to and why it matters for the analysis of the texts in this study. The discussion begins with the contextual elements.

When and Where[10] – Contextual Elements

To analyse a text meaningfully, it is necessary to situate it in its historical time periods and settings. The ideas, social norms and intellectual assumptions of a given time, together with the author's educational background, intellectual perspective, social status and cultural upbringing, inevitably shape the book's style, themes and priorities. Thus, establishing the chronological and historical frame of each text allows this thesis to identify the cultural and social conditions that may have influenced its author and to read the text's content and pedagogical choices in light of the beliefs, values, and political circumstances of its time.

A second contextual question concerns the settings in which the text was used, whether in schools, at home, or elsewhere. Knowing where a book is used can help determine its audience, level of difficulty, language, and topics, and clarify both its intended audience and the kind of educational activity it was designed to support.

[10] The terms 'where' and 'when' used here are, in fact, a simplification, as contextual factors can encompass a wider range of aspects. During the process of interpreting each book, contextual factors extend beyond these two dimensions, for example, the author's educational background. For the sake of brevity, however, the discussion of contextual background is titled with 'where' and 'when'.

These two contextual questions provide the historical and situational background to aid understanding of the historical and geographical context in which the book was created and used; they do not form part of the pedagogical analysis of the two books. Next, the elements of the 5W1H analytical framework (including who, whom, what, into what, and how) are elaborated in the following section.

3.2.2. 5W1H Analytical Framework

Who - The Educator

An educator is generally understood as an authority figure who offers learners something new (knowledge, skills, or perspectives they do not yet possess) based on the educator's knowledge, experience, and teaching effectiveness, rather than on age or status alone (Reid, 1962). In interpreting the two books, this thesis views the educators as voices (who could be the author or the teacher) who convey their thoughts through the books. Given the relatively limited access to information of 17th-century Europe or 13th-century China, such texts likely exerted a more concentrated influence on their readers than comparable texts would today. Schleiermacher discusses the significance of understanding the author's contextual background, defined as "the area of his time, of his education, and of his occupation – also of his dialect, where and to the extent to which this difference occurs in educated discourse" (Schleiermacher, 1998, p. 31) and Reid (1962) emphasised the need to carefully consider an educator's personality during their career. However, Schleiermacher cautions that clues from the author's area are often only the beginning of understanding his work and do not always appear in all his works; readers still need to make their own judgment on the basis of a general overview of the whole text (Schleiermacher, 1998).

Whom- Learner/reader

When consider who is educated, we usually refer to those who are subject to the educator's intention. Identifying the learners of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* helps one to infer (to the extent possible) the textbook's readership or target audience and how the author adapts and organises its content to students' needs, interests, and level of understanding. According to the definition of education mentioned in the last chapter, a student is a person whose relation with someone/something is intended to be improved. They may be different people from the educators, or they may be the same person (if so, they can be said to be self-educating).

Whether such improvement is possible depends on the student's educability and perhaps on the execution of the educator's intention, which rests on the assumption that it is possible to change this student's relation to something (Kenklies, 2019; Lewin, 2018; Friesen & Osguthorpe, 2018). To borrow from Kierkegaard's perspective: even amidst doubt, educators must maintain faith in this possibility to 'establish' it (Kierkegaard, as cited by Robertson & Liu, In Press). Whether a person can be considered 'educated' remains an open question; what can be assumed is that teachers hold a subjective, hopeful belief that students are teachable. Although the texts are interpreted through the educator's intention, these assumptions about the target learners can be inferred.

What relation(s) – improvable relation(s)

After considering the contextual frame and the potential learners, the remaining questions concern the pedagogical relationship itself: the core of what relation each text seeks to improve, the relation into which they intend to teach, why this relation is worthy to improve, and how it is improved. Broadly speaking, the question of 'what' identifies the object of the relation or what relation is intended to be improved. This object may be something (such as an animal, a skill, or the world) or someone (including someone else, or the student him/herself). Therefore, to describe this

more accurately, this thesis refers to such relations as 'improvable relations'. Identifying these relations becomes the starting point. A single text may construct multiple such relations (for example, learners' relation to nature/to moral conduct/to society), and each of these is then analysed separately according to the questions below.

Into what – possible result

This question concerns the intended outcome or what the learner's relationship to that object should become. This may be as simple as determining what the learners need to know, do or become; it may also be a contested aspect. As Reid (1962) identifies, the effects of education are not always easy to specify and may be interpreted differently. There is often a tension between cultivating responsibility (conformity to norms) and freedom (learners' development), and the texts may lean toward one or the other depending on their underlying philosophy.

How - approach

This question focuses on the pedagogical method by which the books seek to bring about change. Historically, the methods and strategies of education have been as varied, including the model of communicative intercourse through dialogical communication, such as Socratic dialogue or students' debates; the model of experience through engaging experiences, such as students' projects, research, and exploration; and the model of representation, learning, and transformation as induction to culture through the presentation of cultural objectifications by the educator, such as teaching through instructions. The method chosen reflects assumptions about what kind of teaching is effective for the particular goal; for example, what supports memorisation may differ from what supports reasoning, and these assumptions may not always be compatible.

Why – possible reasons

Broadly speaking, educators have many reasons for intending to teach something to their students, either to help individuals pursue their self-development and thus improve their living conditions, to help the citizens of a society to be educated in order to achieve greater stability, to educate human beings in order to realise a more perfect state of being, or even for some reason unilaterally on the part of the educator himself or herself. Understanding the educator's background is therefore helpful for understanding their motivations and purposes, or, in this thesis, their intentions in writing.

Together, these eight elements (when, where, who, whom, what, into what, how, and why) form the contextual elements and the 5W1H analytical framework that can be applied systematically to any pedagogical text, regardless of its origin. From a hermeneutic perspective, these questions establish a rich content framework that enables readers to focus on diverse aspects of the teaching relationship, thereby facilitating meticulous reading and understanding of each text. From a comparative research perspective, they provide clear, shared points of reference, enabling the juxtaposition of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*. Now that I have introduced these important educational elements, I will discuss the research method, including a detailed discussion of the methods of interpretation and comparison. The next section moves to Hermeneutics as the method of interpretation.

3.3. Hermeneutics as the Method of Interpretation

The 5W1H framework outlined above identified what questions the thesis asks of each text. It does not, however, specify how those questions are to be answered, that is, how meaning is to be drawn from the texts written centuries ago in languages and conceptual worlds different from my own. This is a question of interpretation, and the following section elaborates on how I have used hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics, described as ‘the art of understanding’ (Schleiermacher, 1998, pp. 5-6), is commonly used to understand and interpret textual artefacts. Originating in the interpretation of biblical and classical texts (Palmer, 1969), its scope has since extended to a wide range of cultural artefacts, including poetry, images, and texts. The two books, *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, as textual artefacts, fall well within the scope.

Methodologically, Schleiermacher (1998) proposed that interpretation is a circular, iterative progression from the components to the whole and back to the parts. Understanding a text means attending to its individual components, such as sentences, words and sections and understanding those components requires referencing back to the whole and vice versa. This thesis thus applies the circular method to both texts by first establishing each text's overall historical/cultural and authorial context, then examining its specific contents in detail, and finally returning to the whole with a refined understanding. This is especially relevant as the author of each book has not explicitly laid out his pedagogical intentions throughout the textbook; rather, this research must endeavour to discern the meanings concealed in the textual materials. This necessitates repeated reading and careful consideration, placing both the entire work and the authors themselves within their historical and cultural contexts to grasp their latent intentions. A key challenge is also the historicity of meaning, where words and concepts central to each book may have carried different meanings in their original context than they do today. To avoid imposing modern theoretical frameworks retrospectively, this thesis prioritises, wherever possible, concepts and theories contemporary with, or earlier than, the texts under study (Confucian classics for *The Three Character Classic*, and educational thought up to and including Comenius's own era for *Orbis Pictus*).

Philosophers like Hirsch, who stress the necessity for cultural literacy, have made hermeneutics an important part of education. For Hirsch, the value of cultural literacy

with hermeneutics lies in its being ‘useful knowledge’, not ‘inert knowledge’, for it enables people to navigate themselves in society with ease (Gallagher, 1992, p. 222). Hermeneutics and education have a symbiotic relationship, as hermeneutical theory is commonly shaped by the analysis of educational experiences, which paves the way for new possibilities for revision within education. The formation of preconceptions in educational experiences can be attributed to a number of factors, including personal connections to education and institutionalised traditions that define the core of education. Among these are many interactions that occur directly as a result of the teachers’ classroom presentations. In the classroom, rather than simply passing on information, interaction relies on the exchange between teachers’ pedagogical presentations and students’ interpretations of those presentations (Remillard, 2005; Son & Kim, 2015). Even if the teacher does not explicitly or implicitly explain their idea, they can still guide students to their own realisation of what the concept means. Despite this, students’ perspectives and experiences may call for diverse interpretations. In addition, there is a back-and-forth between the instructor's professional knowledge and the presentation, which not only facilitates comprehension but also nurtures the development of novel perspectives.

A key point of contention among scholars throughout the ages has been whether interpreters can discern the author’s original intention. As Forster (2018) argued in his book, an interpretation that draws on readers’ perspectives and experiences is inevitable, but the author’s original intention should still be respected. Meanwhile, Herder (as cited in Forster, 2018) understands hermeneutics as restoring the text author’s original intention and avoiding incorporation into the interpreter’s own perspective, though theorists like Gadamer argue that the text author’s original intention can’t be recovered (Gadamer, 2013). Similarly, this research itself confronts such a dichotomy, for in attempting to analyse the possible authorial intentions in design and convey them through two textual materials, I inevitably remain influenced by my own cultural and educational background.

Further, it is critical to discuss the role of language within hermeneutics in this research. According to Schleiermacher (1998), language is a necessary precondition for advancing understanding because it contains both objective and subjective views. Hermeneutics does not mean understanding difficult passages in foreign languages only, as the interpreter is presupposed to be familiar with the language used and the object itself. Although Gallagher maintains that hermeneutics is ultimately 'not linguistic' (Gallagher, 1992, p. 6), the importance of language as a medium for information transformation cannot be overstated. Language remains a vehicle of expression, and readers are tasked with discovering the meaning hidden within the author's work, as represented by language, rather than dissecting how language functions to convey the author's objectives. In this research, *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* utilise two distinct languages (one in Latin and European Vernaculars, the other in traditional Chinese), which require this research to analyse not only the meanings of the words but also the educational ideas behind the languages.

Finally, Gadamer's notion of the 'fusion of horizons' (German: Horizontverschmelzung) highlighted the significance of studying traditional artefacts, such as the two books chosen for this research (Gadamer, 2013). These two books are artefacts that have been transmitted from one generation to the next by means of the medium of language in order to be disseminated. For Gadamer, hermeneutics not only offers an approach to understanding textual artefacts but also infuses them with life, allowing them to endure for centuries through continuous, circular interpretation (Gadamer, 2013). When an individual is striving to absorb and interpret the meaning of a piece of written material, their own level of understanding aligns with that of the original authors and users, allowing new understandings of education, studenthood, and the world to emerge and, thus, expansion to take place (Gadamer, 2013). In this way, textual circulating objects are not remnants of a former world; instead, they transcend that world and reach the realm of the significance of his argument. This is

how memories and experiences are preserved over the years, explaining how human wisdom accumulates and is transmitted to the next generation, and pointing out why they must be traced back to the classic works of our older generations or ancestors. For this reason, this research decides to study two traditional texts to explore the educational intentions of older generations who aim to educate their younger generation.

3.4. Comparative Methodology

3.4.1. The Methodological Function of Comparison

The decision to examine two texts rather than a single one is based on several reasons. The first and most direct reason is connected to the rationale of this research. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this research is initially motivated by the observation of two different groups of students, which led to the question of how the two traditions introduce the world to the children. The two traditional classic textbooks, *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, are therefore selected to assist in identifying the pedagogical meaning and intentions within their respective traditions.

From a methodological perspective, examining a single text alone may lead to an oversight of certain educational intentions; presenting two texts side by side highlights their distinctive features more clearly, deepening the understanding of each through the examination of their similarities and differences, and potentially giving rise to new insights (Freiberger, 2019). The goal of comparison here is not ranking one above the other; instead, it is treated as an interpretive method that makes the educational intentions embedded in each text more visible, in accordance with the original design of this thesis. In this regard, interpreting and comparing *Orbis Pictus and The Three Character Classic* in this study may enhance comprehension and

provide a more thorough understanding of the substance, themes, and ideas of each work.

One important role of comparing texts from different cultural traditions is to facilitate cross-cultural exchanges by recognising the similarities and differences between two cultures and, in the process, identifying opportunities for mutual learning (Cao, 2013). By studying concepts and discourses from other texts, readers may realise the connections and inspirations that yield distinctive thoughts and viewpoints, ultimately fostering fresh ideas and insights.

For these reasons, this thesis employs a comparative analysis to examine the similarities and differences, thereby exploring the pedagogical intentions embodied and the worlds constructed in the two textbooks. The following section explores the comparative framework suitable for the comparison.

3.4.2. Selecting a Comparative Framework

Having established the importance of comparison, the discussion now turns to establishing the methodological framework for comparison.

However, there currently seems to be no universally recognised, effective comparative framework. As Watson (1996, p. 381, cited in Bray, 2003) has highlighted, the reason for the complexity and plurality of methods in the field of comparative education is 'because comparative education is the product of many disciplines, it cannot lay claim to any single conceptual or methodological tool that sets it apart from other areas of education or from the applied social sciences.' Although some scholars go to great lengths to argue that there is a single scientific method for comparative research, in reality no such method exists (Bray, 2003). The following discussion surveys several influential models before settling on the one best suited to this study.

Sultana (2011) observes that many texts in comparative education are organised either thematically or around particular countries and regions. Arnove (2013) identifies three dimensions of comparative education: a scientific dimension concerned with theory-building; a pragmatic dimension that studies other systems to improve policy and practice in one's own context; and a global dimension that fosters international understanding. This is especially important for my research, as it indicates that comparative methods should be selected in line with the cultural and educational context and grounded in the research's aims and objectives.

Some scholars have formalised the comparison process itself. Multi-level studies, as demonstrated by Bray and Thomas (1995), highlight the advantages of using a multidimensional approach to comparison.

However, the discussions mentioned above have largely focused on comparisons at the level of education systems and policies; when it comes to translating such comparisons into concrete steps, Bereday (1964) is the most representative and influential figure. Bereday's four-step comparative analysis method, on the other hand, contends that before prediction and eventual borrowing can be attempted, a thorough assessment of the area is required to get a comprehensive understanding of national education practices. As shown in Figure 7, Bereday's framework consists of four procedures for conducting comparative education studies across two nations (Bereday, 1964). The model's first phase is to *describe* educational data for two countries individually. Following that, *interpretation* takes place within historical, political, economic, and social circumstances. The third phase requires juxtaposition according to comparability criteria and comparative analysis hypotheses, and the last step requires simultaneous comparison under the hypothesis to reach a conclusion.

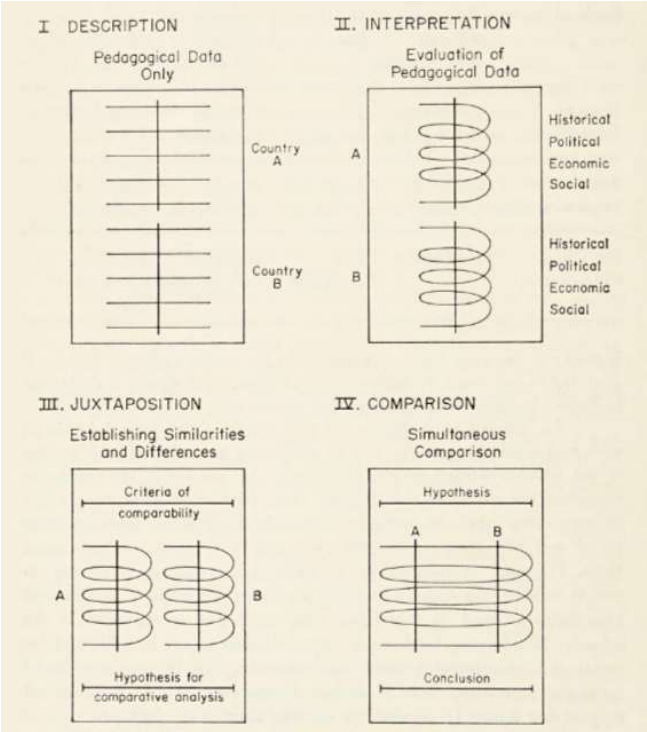


Figure 7: Reproduced from Bereday's model for undertaking comparative studies (1964, p. 28).

Later applications of Bereday's model, such as Bray's (2003) discussion of Hong Kong and Macao, show how comparison may be justified when two cases share sufficient commonalities to make their differences meaningful. Bray's example highlights why Hong Kong and Macao are a desirable pair for comparison: they share enough similarities to make analysing their differences important. The similarities, as noted, are that they are both located on China's south coast, are both primarily populated by Cantonese-speaking Chinese, are both urban societies with economies based primarily on services and light industry and with insignificant agricultural sectors, were both colonies of European powers, and have both been returned to China and governed as Special Administrative Regions since the end of the twentieth century. Consequently, it has been demonstrated that their educational sectors differ significantly and share similarities. This provides a good foundation for meaningful comparison to determine the extent and reasons for differences and similarities, as

well as to deepen conceptual knowledge through examination of the forces at work and their interactions.

The Bereday model has often been used to compare educational systems in their social and political contexts, in which the description and interpretation stages involve educational geography and social analysis to compare contemporary educational structures and policy interventions across two distinct areas (Adick, 2018). However, since the focus of my research is on two historical and pedagogical texts rather than systems, and my interest is in a hermeneutic-interpretive rather than socio-scientific approach, this approach has limitations. For this reason, an intercultural comparison model suitable for conceptual and non-empirical projects would be more applicable to the present research.

3.4.3. Freiberger's Five-fold Model Comparative Framework

To respond to the need for a comparative framework that supports conceptual, textual, and cross-cultural interpretation, this study turns to the comparative methodology proposed by Freiberger (2019). Although his framework originates in the field of religious studies, the texts and concepts it compares also belong to different cultures and eras, which is consistent with the subject matter of this thesis. This framework has two parts: the ***configuration*** of a comparative study, which specifies its *mode*, *scale* and *scope*; and the ***comparative process***, which breaks down into **five steps**.

3.4.3.1. Configuration (*mode*, *scale* and *scope)*

The first part, *configuration* within this framework, provided a suitable approach for the design of the comparative phase of this PhD thesis. Freiberger argues that a research ***mode*** reflects the research goal; it may be illuminative, taxonomic, or a

combination of the two. *The illuminative mode is* aimed at gaining a more comprehensive understanding of a particular topic by comparing it with another item; *the taxonomic mode* aims to gain a more accurate understanding of the category to which several items of the same kind belong by comparing them; when this comparison occurs in both ways, it gives rise to what Sharma (2005, as cited in Freiberger, 2019) calls *reciprocal illumination*. This study adopts precisely this two-way interpretative mode because it uses each text to shed light on the exploration of the other text's educational aims and principles.

Scale refers to the degree to which the analysis zooms in, broadly categorised by Freiberger into three levels: macro, meso, and micro. Within Freiberger's typology, this study is closest to the micro level, as it is based on a close reading of two specific texts.

Scope refers to the potential relationships among the subjects being compared. The comparison in this thesis is both cross-cultural and cross-historical, as the two texts originated in different cultural spheres and different eras, and there is no presumed direct historical connection between them. In other words, the comparison in this thesis is an analogy rather than a relational one, because the comparison of the two textbooks is based on their similar educational forms and functions, rather than on one having influenced the other.

Because there is no historical connection, an analogical comparison must rely on a *tertium comparationis*. According to Freiberger (2019, p. 151), *tertium comparationis means '*a particular property that both comparands are assumed to have in common'. The *tertium comparationis* should be neutral, present in both texts, testable and revisable (Freiberger, 2019). In this research, the five improvable relations selected as tertium comparationis concern the learner's relation to *sound, words, discourse,*

action, and world order[11]. Details of the selection of *tertium comparationis* of this research project are discussed in section 3.5.1.

3.4.3.2. Comparative Process (5 steps)

The second part, the five steps in the comparison process, provides an operational framework for this thesis. Building on Smith's four-fold model of description, comparison, redescription, and rectification (Smith, 2000, as cited in Freiberger, 2019), Freiberger (2019) developed his five-fold model of the comparative process that includes selection, description, juxtaposition, redescription, and rectification/theory formation (Fig. 8).

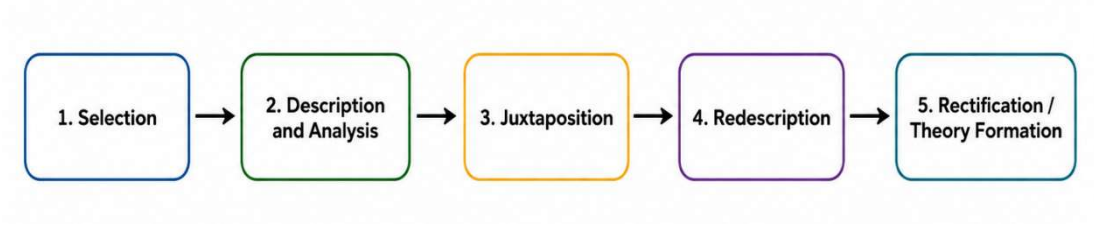


Figure 8: Freiberger's Five-Fold comparative model. (Author-generated).

In this fivefold model, *Selection* refers to the identification of the sources and the '*tertium comparationis'.* This step is realised when the two objects of comparison are selected according to particular criteria that are chosen by the person comparing. This step is the most fundamental and is most closely linked to the researcher's interests

[11] These selected five improvable relations (sound, words, discourse, action and world order) are used as a broad comparative framework, which will subsequently be used to guide the analysis of *Orbis Pictus* and *the Three Character Classic*, as well as to compare the two. Given that both books possess unique linguistic and educational-cultural characteristics, and to ensure accuracy, the terminology used in the detailed analysis may be adjusted slightly in order to reflect the specific features of each text. Such adjustments do not alter the consistency of the overall comparative framework.

and background. As the researcher's understanding changes over time, the selected points of comparison may need to be revised as more nuanced criteria are determined.

Description refers to the researcher observing and analysing their content, determined by the study's goal and the mode. This descriptive work is, in fact, an analytical process that is carried out primarily through interpretations of the objects of comparison.

Juxtaposition is the most essential operation in a comparative study, as it involves completing the objectives selected. In this process, one would present the two objects of comparison side by side and identify and analyse their similarities and differences with regard to the points being compared.

Redescription refers to describing and understanding these two items again. Deeper understandings and new ideas may emerge, leading to the next stage, rectification and theory formation.

Rectification and *theory formation* mean the researcher aims to revise and reflect on the initial interpretation and to fill in gaps in understanding. According to Freiberger (2019), this stage is not mandatory in all cases, but if possible, new theories may be proposed during it.

Freiberger's framework therefore provides both the comparative logic (by identifying the mode, scale, and scope of the comparative objectives) and the procedural structure (five steps including selection, description, juxtaposition, redescription, and rectification/theory formation) of this thesis to show how the analysis moves from separate interpretation to comparison and reflection.

This comparative framework, together with the 5W1H analytical framework and hermeneutics as the method of interpretation, constitutes the methodological

approach of this thesis. The following section explains how they are operationalised as a full analytical procedure.

3.5. Bringing the Methods Together: The Analytical Procedure

The preceding sections have introduced the main methodological components of this study: the 5W1H analytical framework, hermeneutic interpretation, and Freiberger's comparative methodology. This section brings these components together by explaining how they are operationalised in the analysis. It first clarifies the selection of the tertium comparationis and sample chapters, before outlining the integrated analytical procedure through which *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* are interpreted and compared.

3.5.1. Selection of Tertium Comparationis and Sample Chapters

In this research, the five improvable relations (the learner's relation to sound, words, discourse, action, and world order) are selected as tertium comparationis for interpretation and comparative purposes. These categories are not drawn from the structure of either text, as neither *Orbis Pictus* nor *The Three Character Classic* comes up with this classification itself. In fact, these five relations are analytical tools devised in this thesis based on my relational understanding of education established in Chapter 2, for the purpose of analysing these two books. The views of Kenklies (2019), Lewin (2018), and Friesen and Osguthorpe (2018) have led me to understand education as the intentional process of changing or improving the relation between learners and certain aspects of the world. Therefore, when analysing these two

educational texts, I need to ask: which aspects of children's relation with the world could this book be used to improve?

The five improvable relations are initially identified during my preliminary hermeneutic reading of both texts. First, because both books function as elementary educational materials, despite their different languages, cultures, and historical periods, I observe that each addresses the learner's relations with language at its most basic level (sound), with vocabulary (words), and with structured communication (discourse). This thesis therefore begins by identifying the first three relations that can be improved, namely, the relation between the learner and sound, the relation between the learner and words or Chinese characters, and the relation between the learner and discourse. Second, both books demonstrate a tendency to provide guidance on action, the fourth relation therefore extends the analytical focus beyond linguistic learning to the ways in which the texts address how the learner should act, that is, the relation between the learner and moral and social conduct (action). Finally, I explore how the texts, as a whole, represent a certain kind of society and the wider world to children, as the fifth relation: the relation between the learner and the broader order of the world (the world order). These five relations therefore form a pathway that extends from teaching at the most basic level of language to improving children's relations with the wider world. However, this does not mean all children must follow these five stages when studying these two books, nor does it imply the authors intended them to be studied this way. These improvable relations function collectively as an analytical tool I have established for the purposes of analysis and comparison.

This research then examines these five relations as Tertium Comparationis in accordance with the criteria set out in this thesis's methodology. According to Freiberger's definition of the Tertium Comparationis, the tertium comparationis should be neutral, present in both texts, testable and revisable (Freiberger, 2019).

First, as the tertium comparationis, these five relations remain sufficiently neutral for the purposes of comparison, to avoid directly adopting a concept specific to one culture as a benchmark for assessing another culture. For example, this study employs neutral language such as 'the relation between students and the wider world order' in order to avoid transposing ideas such as Christian doctrine into the cultural context of *The Three Character Classic*. Second, each relation is supported by identifiable textual evidence in both works. In the sections analysing *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, this thesis selects specific example chapters to provide textual evidence for analysing these relations. Thirdly, these five relations are all open to scrutiny. They are first examined and analysed in the respective interpretation chapters of the two books; then, in the comparative chapter, they are juxtaposed to analyse their similarities and differences and to reflect on them. Finally, these five relations are all subject to revision; they are not fixed classifications. If this study identifies instances that do not meet the comparative criteria during the detailed interpretation and comparison of the cycles of the whole and the parts of the two books, the Tertium Comparationis formed by these five relations can be adjusted as necessary.

Having identified the five relations as an analytic tool, I then proceed to analyse each relation based on detailed textual evidence from *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*. Since it would be impossible to analyse every sentence and every chapter of both books in equal detail, it is necessary to select specific sample chapters. The selected sample chapters for interpreting and analysing each relation were chosen carefully, guided by three main considerations.

First, the sample chapters need to be closely relevant to the relation under examination and provide sufficiently clear textual evidence for analysis. For example, sample chapters from *The Three Character Classic* Verse 1 人之初，性本善。 性相近，习相远 and Verse 2 苟不教，性乃迁。 教之道，贵以专 display clear,

recurring rhythmic and rhyming patterns, providing suitable examples for analysing the first relation between learners and the sound of language through rhyme. Second, the structural significance of a particular chapter within the text was also taken into account. In other words, a particular chapter may be selected either because its position within the text gives it particular structural significance, or because, when read together with other chapters in the text, these chapters reveal a broader organisational pattern relevant to the relation under analysis. For example, the 'Living Alphabet' chapter in *Orbis Pictus*, which appears at the very beginning of the main text, is particularly well-suited to analysing the first relation of improving the student's relation with sound; while from the 'God' chapter in the first chapter, through the middle sections on the natural world and human life, to the final chapter on the 'Last Judgement', these chapters are scattered throughout the book but, when taken together, form a hierarchical structure of the world, providing material for analysing the fifth relation between the student and the broader world order. Third, where there are several suitable examples that could be used to illustrate a particular improvable relation, priority was given to themes or subject matter that appear in both texts. For example, although they differ in their definitions and organisation of these themes, both *Orbis Pictus* and *the Three Character Classic* explore family and social relationships, including marital and parent-child relationships, and both place a clear emphasis on virtue. In this way, because both books select these themes as important content for children, although they are not compared directly, these passages were therefore prioritised as sample chapters to analyse and illustrate the relations in their respective contexts.

Although the five relations are analytically distinguished, they are not always separable in the two books, since a single sample chapter may simultaneously be relevant to more than one relation. For example, Verse 14 三纲者，君臣义，父子亲，夫妇顺 in *The Three Character Classic* encompasses not only its rhythmic and rhyming form, but also the interpretation of words, behaviour, and the order of social

relationships. Therefore, the sample chapters were selected primarily to facilitate analysis of the particular improvable relation; this does not mean these two books can be broken down entirely into five distinct sections based on these five relations.

Generally speaking, consistent with Freiberger's (2019) account, the selection of Tertium Comparationis is of methodological importance, as cross-cultural, analogical comparisons might take things out of context and reduce them to abstractions; it is precisely for this reason that Freiberger (2019) insists on clearly identifying these elements above and on understanding each object within its own socio-historical context. This requirement is directly consistent with the commitment outlined earlier in this thesis: to conduct interpretations appropriate to their historical context and to guard against anachronism.

3.5.2. The Integrated Analytical Procedure

This thesis adopts a conceptual research design integrating a hermeneutical textual analysis, an educational theory lens through a 5W1H analytical framework, and a cross-cultural, analogical-comparative study framework based on Freiberger's (2019) five-fold model: selection, description, juxtaposition, redescription, and rectification. These strands operate in conjunction across the phases of analysis of two texts (*Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*), individually and collectively. This integrated procedure is summarised in Figure 9 and elaborated in the discussion that follows.

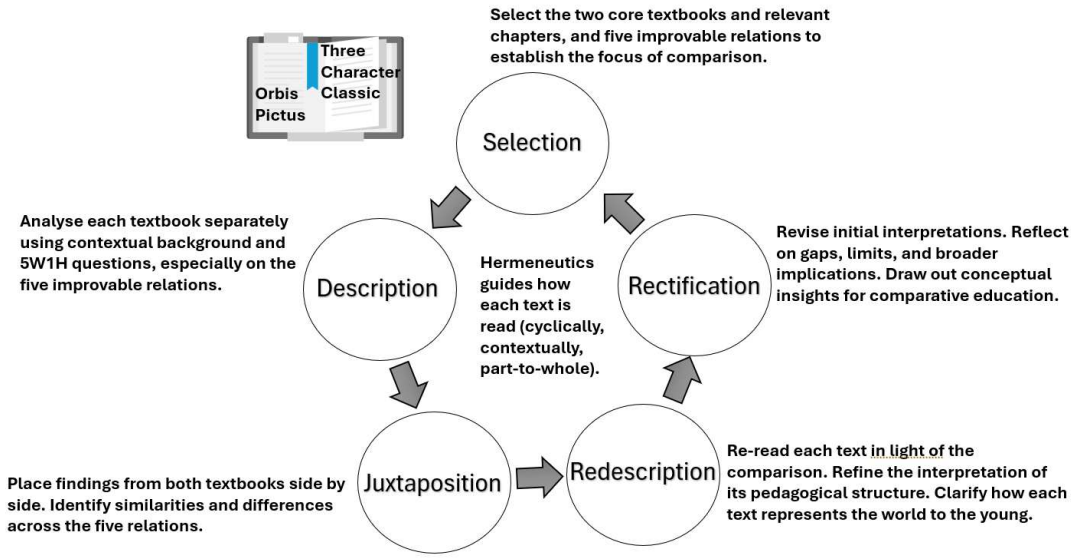


Figure 9: Cyclical research process overview. (Author-generated).

Step 1 Selection: In this stage, the two books, *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, are selected as comparanda. Alongside this, five improvable relations (*sound, words, discourse,* action, and *world order*) are selected to serve as *tertium comparationis* for the analysis and comparison of the two texts. This stage involves a preliminary reading of the sources, grounded in hermeneutics and drawing primarily on Schleiermacher's view that understanding is a cyclical movement between the whole and its parts (Schleiermacher, 1998). Although the selected books usually remain fixed once the research project is confirmed, the tertium comparationis may be revised during analysis or comparison if needed.

Step 2 Description: Each text is first analysed within its historical and intellectual context to gain an overall understanding of its contextual background (answering the contextual questions of *where* and *when*), and each text is then analysed through its core six analytical questions of the 5W1H framework (Uljens, 2004), including the following: Who is the educator? Who is being educated? What relation is improved? Into what? How was it improved? And why is it worth improving? The first two questions of *who* is the educator and *who* is being educated are addressed once for

the text as a whole. The remaining four analytical questions are then applied not to the text as a whole but to the five improvable relations in turn (sound, words, discourse, action and world order as tertium comparationis selected from Step 1). For each relation, the analysis asks what relation is to be improved, into what, how it is to be improved, and why it is worth improving.

Step 3 Juxtaposition: After analysing each book separately according to the above points, the two books are then placed together, *in* parallel and in conjunction, to explore their commonalities and differences regarding pedagogical details within their textual designs and their respective influences on students' understanding of the world. The analysis then returns to a hermeneutic understanding, reintegrating these partial insights into a comprehensive interpretation of the text. The comparison also focuses on the five improvable relations selected as the tertium comparationis, explained in Step 1. The five relations could still be revised during this step if necessary.

Step 4 Redescription: Following the side-by-side analysis of the two texts in the previous step, this step seeks to generate new insights by examining the similarities and differences identified between them in order to illuminate a new understanding through comparison. If a new understanding has been reached, seek to refine the interpretation of the text. This also involves a renewed hermeneutic reading in which the comparative insights gained are carried back into the text, moving between its parts and the whole so that the new understanding can reshape and rephrase the interpretation if applicable.

Step 5 Rectification and theory formation: This step primarily focuses on clarifying and reflecting on educational and hermeneutical issues raised by the attempt to read and then compare these very different texts, including but not limited to genre and pedagogical function; cosmology of the text; temporal and cultural asymmetry; implicit theories of the learner that each text makes; and the authority that the text

assumes such as God and Sage. At the end of this step, repeated reading may occur, which completes the hermeneutic cycle.

In general, this comparative analysis, through these 5 steps, adopts an exploratory approach to interpret the pedagogical relationships and atmospheres that two texts sought to establish for children under different linguistic, cultural, and historical conditions. The next section explores the criteria for selecting materials and sources.

3.6. Research Materials and Sources

3.6.1. Selection of the Two Books as the research objects

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the primary materials for my research are *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*. These texts are examined through selected chapters and passages that reveal how each work constructs pedagogical relations between the learner and language, knowledge, morality, society and the world.

The versions and specific editions used are as follows. For *Orbis Pictus*, the text is cited from the 1887 edition edited by C. W. Bardeen (Comenius, 1887), while *The Three Character Classic* is from the Chinese Text Project edited by Sturgeon (Three Character Classic, n.d.). Unless otherwise stated, English renderings of *The Three Character Classic* are my own.

3.6.2. Supplementary Works and Related Contextual Sources

In addition to the above selected texts, the other works by the same authors deserve attention, as they help me better understand their educational and philosophical ideas. This step was particularly helpful for my research because these works could

serve as contextual support for understanding the educational ideas as implied in two textbooks.

To illustrate, in *Orbis Pictus,* Comenius presents some of his ideas about education, such as the idea that it should be clear and straightforward. However, knowing why he thinks this, or what has inspired him to think this, was also important to me in interpreting his reason or intention, which, to an extent, was found in *The Great Didactic*[12] (Comenius, 1910). In his sixty-year career in educational research and academia, Comenius's educational ideas and theories are revealed through numerous educational works, including his philosophy, research areas, and general ideas. Although I avoid relying directly on statements from his other books to judge his attitude in this book, it does offer an overall understanding of his work, which is necessary to explore his conceptual orientation in depth.

For the same reason, I also tried to search for the work that was written by the same author of the other book, *Three Character Classic*. However, due to the reason that the book has been circulated for more than seven hundred years and has gone through several modifications and revisions, there is no consensus on who the author is in history, which means I could not explore the author's background and his basic possible intention in education from his own works. My alternative is to search for philosophical ideas and educational thinking in ancient China at the time the book was written, primarily Confucian philosophy in education. Therefore, I searched several representative philosophers, such as *Kongzi (孔子), Mengzi (孟子),* and *Xunzi (荀子),* to explore their claims.

[12] This thesis uses secondary resources, such as other books written by the same authors, to interpret the authors' perspective and cultural background. It is clear that only the chosen two books are the main objects to be studied, as the author's ideas may change or adjust over time as his experience and knowledge evolve.

Thirdly, secondary sources, such as literature and the research of other theorists that critique or build on the two books, have been read, although not counted as representations of the educational intentions represented in the texts.

3.6.3. Literature Searching Process

The relevant literature was located through library catalogue searches and academic databases, including China National Knowledge Infrastructure [13] (CNKI), Google Scholar, JSTOR, Wiley Online Library, and other university-accessible resources. Search terms included 'Comenius', 'Jan Amos Komenský', 'Orbis Sensualium Pictus', 'The Visible World in Pictures', '*Orbis Pictus*', '*Three Character Classic*', 'San Zi Jing', and related terms in both English and Chinese. These sources were used to establish the textual basis of the study, to contextualise the two works historically and culturally, and to support the comparative interpretation developed in the dissertation. This bilingual sourcing is itself a condition of the study, allowing each tradition to be interpreted through scholarship produced within it rather than solely through secondary commentary in English.

3.7. Methodological Significance of the Research

The methodological innovation of this research lies in combining hermeneutic text interpretation, the 5W1H analytical framework, and Freiberger's model of intercultural comparison. Each of these three methods serves a distinct purpose: hermeneutics provides a method of interpretation, the 5W1H analytical framework provides a framework for analysis, and Freiberger's comparative model provides a

[13] CNKI provides readers in China and abroad with unified search, navigation, online reading, and download services for Chinese academic literature, foreign-language literature, dissertations, newspapers, conferences, yearbooks, tools, and other resources.

procedure for comparison. The key to this comparative research is that, by interpreting textbooks as representations of education and education as improving students' relations with certain aspects of the world, this thesis breaks down the interpretation of textbooks into an examination of six pedagogical elements (the 5W1H framework). Further, the five educational relations (the core of the 5W1H framework) identified as the 'tertium comparationis' provide a common basis for comparison, whilst the hermeneutic commitment to contextual interpretation helps to avoid anachronisms and cultural oversimplification.

This combination is of great significance: the two books are first analysed and interpreted independently within their own historical, cultural, linguistic and educational contexts. Once these individual interpretations have been completed, the two texts are then compared on the basis of the 'five improvable relations', which are neutral yet provisional. In this way, this thesis can shift from the interpretation of individual texts to a systematic comparison of the two texts whilst avoiding the use of the standard of one text to judge the merits or disadvantages of another. Rather, this research interprets similarities and differences as manifestations of distinct educational traditions. In this sense, the research design offers a structured approach that allows for a comparison of two educational texts from vastly different historical and cultural contexts whilst preserving their respective distinctiveness.

Next, the discussion turns to the limitations of this research project.

3.8. Limitations & Considerations

This research may be limited in five aspects. These limits do not undermine this research's feasibility, but they should be carefully considered.

The first consideration is the limit of textual interpretation. This thesis focuses on the probable educational intentions embedded in two classic textbooks. Although as an

interpreter, one can never fully understand what an author really wants to reveal, texts are inevitably shaped by the authors' experiences, interests, and expectations, which are grounded in their own capacities for conceptualisation. Therefore, research based on those specific textbooks will inevitably reflect the author's perspectives. During this research, an interpretation of the exact texts and materials of two authors will be developed rather than a general discussion of the matter itself. That is to say, this research will focus mainly on the exploration of the pedagogical meanings represented in the chosen texts, rather than on pursuing a universally accepted definition in the field of education.

The second consideration is the asymmetry of historical, linguistic, and cultural factors, which is connected to the abovementioned first consideration. As noted earlier in Chapter 1, *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* were written in the 17th and 13th centuries, respectively, in distinct countries on different continents, resulting in these two selected texts differing in many respects. Firstly, the languages employed in the two texts differ. Although numerous translations and interpretations by scholars have yielded various editions such as those edited by Chmel (1833), Bardeen (1887), and Kühnel (1910), these editions primarily utilise European languages, such as Czech, Latin, English, and German, whereas *The Three Character Classic* employs the written language of ancient Chinese. Second, because *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* were created and popularised in different countries and at different times, their cultures and values may differ. The last thing to note is that the two texts are structured differently: *Orbis Pictus* is bilingual, while *The Three Character Classic* is written in a single language. Consequently, their educational frameworks also diverge somewhat; a comparison of the knowledge points does not seem necessarily appropriate.

Since the two books vary in several aspects due to their span of time and geographical differences, the validity standard and principle of interpreting the scientific content

of each book may be quite different, because as one might expect, literacy materials from two different language systems are bound to be very different in terms of materials development and literacy education. Therefore, this study adopts neutral comparative points and avoids judging the correctness or incorrectness of their contents but rather focuses on the improved relation between the students and something in the educational process. In other words, this research does not involve comparing knowledge points, thereby ensuring comparability between the two. In this way, although the two books span a long period, this does not affect the feasibility of this study.

The third consideration is the critique of the text materials. Since the two textbooks were written three hundred years ago and seven hundred years ago, respectively, there have been many translated and annotated versions. To secure the material to be analysed, this research will use primary sources as the textual materials, supported by two English translations of each book. Therefore, as mentioned in Section 3.6.1, the versions and specific editions used are the 1887 edition of *Orbis Pictus*, edited by Bardeen and translated by Hoole (Comenius, 1887), and *The Three Character Classic*, from the Chinese Text Project, edited by Sturgeon and translated by *Herbert Giles*. Due to time constraints in the research (Bryman, 2012), this research will mainly focus on the two textual materials mentioned, prioritising accuracy over quantity. Small-scale research may pose challenges, but it can also offer significant benefits (Bray & Packer, 1993).

The fourth consideration is the risk of anachronism. In this study, since the analysis focuses on the pedagogical structures of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, as well as comparisons between certain aspects of these two textbooks, I need to ensure the accuracy of historical and factual information to maintain the rigour of the knowledge presented. For example, in comparing *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, if I assume that these two textbooks share the same educational

aim, I need to consider whether this assumption stems solely from their status as the same instructional material. After examining the educational goals, target audiences, and philosophical ideas behind these two books, I must question whether my initial assumption remains valid. Another example is that if I describe Confucian hierarchical education in terms of modern democratic values, it is in fact positioning the book *Three Character Classic* within an external framework rather than analysing it on its own terms. The consequence of using modern theories in this research is that it could distort the original purpose and function of the book, as it was clearly not designed for modern 'student-centred learning' but rather for moral cultivation within a hierarchical structure. Therefore, to avoid anachronism and position the interpretation within the logic and framework of their own time, the pedagogical analysis of *The Three Character Classic* is based on Confucian classics such as the Analects and the Four Books, which were also popular and authoritative during the Song Dynasty, rather than on modern educational theories. Similarly, a 21st-century perspective won't be imposed on this thesis's analysis of *Orbis Pictus*[14]. Instead, literature resources and educational philosophy that emerged around and before the 17th century are used to analyse the book. In short, to avoid misplacing the study in an unsuitable framework, it is essential to acknowledge the origins of each text's differing knowledge structures.

The fifth limitation concerns the positionality and reflexivity of the researcher. As a Chinese student studying in an English-speaking country, I face the language barrier and bring the perspective of an international student. Although the author has done their best to maintain the highest level of accuracy in understanding, there is still a

[14] However, I acknowledge that my theoretical influence is situated in the 21st century, and so an interpretation cannot avoid this. Furthermore, this acknowledgement can be applied to the notion of "neutral" that I use to describe the theoretical framework I have set out as the framework is inspired by continental theory of education.

possibility that certain words or phrases may be hard to translate or slightly change in meaning. Hence, the discrepancy between the interpretation of the author of this research and the 'real' intention of the two authors[15] of the chosen textual materials should be acknowledged. Perhaps especially in a field such as comparative education, the backgrounds and perspectives of the analysts are of significant importance. These accounts fit a tradition in which scholars, such as Hayhoe (2004) and Gu (2001), have recounted their career histories and how personal circumstances have shaped their subsequent thinking about the field. Language is another typical barrier encountered in comparative education. Translations are a poor alternative for direct dialogue, and Halls (1990, p. 63) observes that 'for comparative studies to thrive, the linguistic barrier remains the most difficult to overcome.' Direct linguistic access to both primary and secondary sources enables researchers to detect crucial nuances and prevent mistakes that may result from poor translation and linguistic-cultural bias.

Considering that general ethical issues related to the education and study of schools and universities usually involve investigations on humans (The Ethics Research Guidebook, n.d.) and that this conceptual (non-empirical) research does not involve human beings directly but instead artefacts that they have produced, this research raises no such concerns. With reference to the University Ethics Committee and the information it provides (https://www.strath.ac.uk/ethics/), and with confirmation from professionals such as a superior, ethical approval is unnecessary for this research, specifically the two textbooks.

[15] The term 'two authors' used here is for the convenience of elaboration. In fact, in the subsequent contextual analyses of authorship in Chapter 4 and in Chapter 5, I will clarify that the author of *the Orbis Pictus* is indeed Comenius, while the authorship of *the Three Character Classic* is inconclusive. This will be explained in detail in the subsequent chapters (Sections 4.1.3 and 5.1.3).

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological framework of the thesis. As a conceptual and interpretive study that understands education as improving students' relations with certain aspects of the world, this thesis adopts a combined methodological framework. This framework includes hermeneutics as the method of interpretation, 5W1H questions as an analytical framework, and Freiberger's Five-Fold comparative process to explore the pedagogical meaning represented in two classical textbooks from distinct locations and time periods.

In the next two chapters (Chapter 4 and Chapter 5), in accordance with this methodological structure and the understanding of the concept of education discussed in Chapter 2, this thesis interprets *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* using the 5W1H questions as the analytical framework. i.e., who is the educator, who is being educated, what relation is being improved, and into what, as well as why and how to improve this relation. The following chapter begins with the interpretation of *Orbis Pictus*.

4. Interpretation of *Orbis Pictus*

In the previous chapter, this thesis establishes the analytical frameworks for both books: a hermeneutical approach, the 5W1H question framework and the intercultural comparative model from Freiberger. In the following two chapters, this research focuses on the interpretation of two texts, *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, in Chapters 4 and 5, respectively, to answer the Research Question 1.1: What pedagogical elements does each text construct, and what intentions do these reflet within their respective educational traditions?

This chapter begins with an introduction to the book by situating it within its historical and cultural background (Section 4.1), including the development of main pedagogical institutions and who the author is and his philosophical ideas that hint at the design of the book, followed by a detailed thematic pedagogical interpretation of the book in the order of the 5W1H questions (Section 4.2). Through this structured approach, this chapter seeks to explore how *Orbis Pictus* presents its answers to the key pedagogical questions between educators, learners and the world.

The discussion now turns to the exploration of *Orbis Pictus*' contextual background.

4.1. Contextual Backgrounds of *Orbis Pictus*

4.1.1. Historical and Cultural Influences

Comenius (1592-1670) wrote primarily in the early-to-mid 17th century, a time of both turmoil and development. The Renaissance, the Reformation, and the development of scientific thought that took place during this period had a profound effect on Europe as a whole and on Comenius himself. Europe's conflicts, most

notably the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), the English Civil War, and the religious upheavals of the Protestant Reformation, also led to its economy starting to change shape. In Hobsbawm's (1954, p. 33) interpretation, the European economy experienced a 'general crisis' in the 17th century, which was the final stage of the full transition from a feudal to a capitalist economy. For example, with the growing commodity economy, markets gradually expanded from local markets to wider regions. Against this background, production techniques in agriculture and handicrafts were gradually standardised, and more specialised handicrafts emerged to meet the growing market demand. In addition, the construction of new sea lanes expanded working life and the global labour force, and the division of labour became more specialised, leading to a wider range of employment.

Changes in the economic sphere also fuelled advances in science, technology, and education. Astronomers and scientists like Kepler and Galileo, through their discoveries, challenged the view of the world as people perceived it, and a material world and cosmic system that operated according to the laws of nature began to unfold in people's minds (Salomoni, 2021). These changes in scientific understanding also shook the Church's authority and people's faith. Printing (available since the 15th century) made books more widely available and popularised the use of pictures, greatly increasing scholars' motivation to publish their findings. Using woodcuts enabled the printing of texts and illustrations on the same page, providing the fundamental conditions for the creation and dissemination of children's picture books, such as *Orbis Pictus*, which integrated text and illustrations on every page.

In short, these broader transformations are particularly relevant to understanding *Orbis Pictus* by reconstructing the historiographical narrative and shaping the context in which it can be interpreted hermeneutically. At a time when the old and the new interacted, when the emerging bourgeoisie sought to replace the feudal aristocracy and the aristocracy resisted change, Comenius was influenced by both traditional

theological ideas and emerging rationality, science, and knowledge, and developed his own distinctive educational ideas. Although this thesis cannot directly infer the kind of influence Comenius exerted, it is reasonable to speculate that he sought to envision a more ordered and rational world through education to respond to the instability and displacement of his time.

In this important backdrop of political and economic transformations, Comenius began his decades of forced exile during the war and began writing the book *Orbis Pictus*. He pointed out that children should be educated in a way that fully explains to them the systematic structure and orderly functioning of the world at that time, through intuitive teaching, illustrated demonstrations, and concise, comprehensive, simple, and intuitive methods of instruction (Comenius, 1887). And it is not surprising that, in this book, he emphasised that children should be educated according to the principles of nature and the laws of the child's mind and body in an orderly manner (Comenius, 1659).

4.1.2. Education and Institutionalisation Influences

The foundation of organised education systems may be traced back to Ancient Greece (6th century B.C.E), particularly to Sparta and Athens, the country's most developed cities. The development of pedagogical ideas and actual pedagogical practice was substantially aided by the contributions of famous Ancient Greek philosophers, including Socrates (469–399 B.C.E), Plato (427–348 B.C.E), and Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E). This period played a crucial role in the broader development of civilisation for several reasons, including the construction of observatories, schools, libraries, museums, and other educational, training, and research institutions (Tanić et al., 2016). Education in the Middle Ages changed in terms of quality and development. Religious buildings such as churches, monasteries, and cathedrals became centres for

the transmission of knowledge and culture, and education itself was based on the authority of teachers, strict discipline, and severe punishment (Salomoni, 2021).

The Catholic Church, which was the most powerful and widespread institutional structure in existence, still dominated by an essentially religious conception of the human person, attempted to respond to these problems through its most dynamic and organisational component, the religious orders. It played an important role in redefining Catholic identity through the education it provided, replacing earlier secular authorities that had run the schools on behalf of city councils and princes. The school system gradually created by the religious orders blended the original secular humanistic elements with the new religious pedagogical paradigm, making room for new scientific discoveries, and the new schools experienced various forms of hybridisation, mainly in the form of collaborations between religious and secular teachers supported by non-religious authorities (Salomoni, 2021).

From the late Middle Ages to the Renaissance and the Reformation, the form of educational institutions changed considerably. From about 1550 onwards, education in Central Europe began to expand rapidly. By 1610, dozens of new schools had been founded, and many existing schools had been reorganised through expansions. Much of the expansion was denominationally motivated: almost all of these educational institutions were founded or expanded by Calvinists, Lutherans and Roman Catholics. By the mid-16th century, there were at least a hundred academic institutions in Central Europe (Freedman, 2024). However, since much of the documentation of these institutions has been lost or destroyed, and some of it, though now in libraries and archives in Central Europe, is unused and sometimes uncatalogued, the full picture remains incomplete. With this fact in mind, Freedman (2024) cautiously divides the academic institutions of Central Europe in the period 1500-1650 into three main categories: elementary schools for the teaching of the vernacular, intermediate schools for the teaching of Latin, and advanced schools or universities. In examining

these three categories, it is also important to take into account the fact that some of the schools were, in fact, multilevel institutions. Between 1550 and 1650, only a small proportion of academic institutions in Central Europe were universities, and most were intermediate schools. During this period, many of these intermediate schools were founded or expanded into comprehensive schools comprising a lower division and a higher division, with one to four faculties (Freedman, 2024).

Due to their distinct ways of functioning, two other kinds of institutions, or pedagogical models, in addition to the three previously mentioned, were also used to supplement the role of education. The first was private schooling, such as the ever-present homeschooling by private tutors, in which princes and other aristocrats employed renowned educators to instruct their children. The other model was 'mission', which was first used by Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits (Bosch, 1991, p. 228). The Jesuits emerged as the most advanced organisation in the analysis and understanding of other languages; they demonstrated their ability to gain the locals' faith and confidence by eloquence, diplomacy, and a readiness to partake in their way of life. In this way, they had created methods for teaching activity and instruction in several foreign nations, and the 'mission' progressively created a pedagogy in the 16th century that included constructing hospitals and providing care for young people and the elderly (Nordkvelle, 2015).

At the same time, this period also saw the emergence of formal schools for the dissemination of knowledge and professional instruction, including grammar schools, universities, and colleges at all levels, with religious institutions playing a leading role in education as the primary teaching institutions for primary education. There was ceaseless competition between the Jesuits and Reformed Protestants, but their shared interest in education united them in developing an educational system designed to win converts at home and in the colonies, as emphasised by both the Catholic Church and Protestant reformers such as Martin Luther (1483–1546), key

figures of the 16th-century Reformation. The interplay between the two traditions was crucial to the development of education (Nordkvelle, 2015). While the educational reforms were initially implemented as a programme to transform the Christian religion into a system of personal beliefs meaningful to ordinary people, and thus to achieve a 'God-centred' programme, the educational reforms later shifted their focus to the individual learner and his or her interest in the improvement and understanding of his or her own life, or in other words, the 'human-centred' programme (Nordkvelle, 2015).

The influence of Humanism[16] in the 14-15th centuries led to a shift from 'God-based' to 'human-based' logic. Early humanists were concerned with how students learned, and a century later, their concern with learning evolved into an interest in teaching and learning (McClintock, 1972; Hamilton, 2001). In the field of education, this shift heralded the mechanisation of human learning; the importance of self-instructional education, or student self-learning, was replaced by didactic education, or the coordination of teaching, in which a single teacher could instruct a large group of students (Nordkvelle, 2015).

The above paragraphs illuminate the background within which Comenius was operating. Certain characteristics, such as denominational/religious-driven educational expansion, a shift in pedagogy from self-instruction to the coordinated, institutionalised teaching of many pupils by a single teacher, and the economic and social upheavals, along with the ease of printing, created opportunities for Comenius and *Orbis Pictus*. Perhaps the Great Didactic could be understood as the theory of this

[16] Humanism was an intellectual movement originating in 14th–15th century Italy, centred on the study of classical Greek and Roman texts (studia humanitatis). Thinkers like Erasmus and Petrarch emphasized human dignity, reason, and education over purely theological concerns, laying groundwork for the Renaissance and Reformation.

new didactic order, and *Orbis Pictus* (1658) as its first concrete instruments for the youngest learners (Comenius, 1910).

Combining this with the moving trait of Comenius' educational journey from Bohemia to Germany, then to Poland and the Kingdom of England, and last to Hungary and the Dutch Republic, it can be inferred this book was primarily intended for use in Central Europe in the 16th-17th centuries. This section provides an overview of the development of the main educational institutions in Central Europe in the 17th century.

There are not many supporting resources to establish the settings of the elementary schools which are the focus of this PhD thesis, except for the knowledge that this type of school usually has only one or more teachers to target vernacular training (including an emphasis on grammar), music, and primary religious education (Freedman, 2024). This suggests a single teacher who has to teach multiple areas of knowledge, ideally in an encyclopaedic way (Freedman, 2024), which will be explained in detail in the discussion chapters. In the following section, the following section begins exploring what Comenius offers us in the book *Orbis Pictus*.

4.1.3. Educational Philosophy of Comenius in *Orbis Pictus*

Having given a glimpse of the major influences, this section focuses on Comenius and his life journey. As a pioneer of modern education, his life experiences and writings have been studied and discussed by many scholars (Beales, 1970; Capková, 1970; DeMott, 1955; Piaget, 1993; Rediger, 1942; Walsh, 1969). In this section, this section examines Comenius' life to see whether some of the life and educational experiences that may have influenced his output and contributions in the realm of education.

4.1.3.1. Overview of Comenius

Johann Amos Comenius was born on March 28, 1592, in Moravia (now in the Czech Republic) into a family of millers who were also members of the Unity of the Brethren [17] (Sadler, 2013). Orphaned at the age of 12, Comenius temporarily lived with his aunt and entered the Unity of the Brethren at 16, when he began studying Latin. Later, he attended the University of Herborn, where he studied Protestant theology, attended courses taught by Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588-1638), and began to study Ratke's famous Memorandum on Language Teaching (Piaget, 1993).

Johann Heinrich Alsted was known and recognised for his diverse interests, including theology, education and encyclopaedias[18]. Alsted was a significant instructor and mentor to Comenius from his student days in Herborn onward. At least, Alsted might be assumed to be the first person to bring Comenius' attention to the problem of teaching, especially in the field of language teaching (Piaget, 1993). A year later, Comenius started at the University of Heidelberg. In 1616, at 24, he returned to his hometown, where he taught briefly at his old school and assisted a friend of the rector with his business. Influenced by his earlier headmaster, Jan Láněcký, he became a

[17] The Moravian Brethren (also called the Unity of Brethren or Unitas Fratrum) was one of the earliest Protestant denominations, founded in Bohemia in 1457, predating Luther's Reformation by decades. It grew out of the movement inspired by the Czech reformer Jan Hus, who was burned at the Council of Constance in 1415 for challenging Church corruption.

The Brethren emphasised a simple, devout Christian life, moral discipline, and scripture over Church tradition. They were remarkably progressive, promoting literacy among their members and translating the Bible into Czech.

[18] *Encyclopaedia Septem Tomis Distincta* (1630) was one of his attempts to organise all human knowledge into a single systematic work. Running to thousands of pages, it covered theology, philosophy, history, mathematics, music, medicine, and much more. It was one of the last and grandest attempts at a universal encyclopedia before the age of specialisation made such a project nearly impossible.

priest and two years later the pastor of a church in Fulneck. Thus, at this period, objectively speaking, Comenius' profession was neither that of a scholar nor that of a professional teacher, but that of a pastor and a teacher in the Unity of the Brethren school.

Upon arriving in Fulneck, he married Magdalena, the mayor of Přerov's stepdaughter, and they had a son, adding to his happiness. The Battle of the White Mountain[19] in 1620 forced Comenius into exile, and he also lost his wife and two children, who died while fleeing the country. He then spent much of the rest of his life as a wandering scholar, living in Poland, England, Sweden, Hungary, the Netherlands, and elsewhere.

Although little is known about the intervening years, it is estimated that he began working on the Great Didactic after settling down with his second wife, Dorothy, in Leszno[20] in 1628 (Sadler, 2013). Comenius' *Janua Linguarum Reserata*, a Latin translation of *Gate of Languages Unlocked*, was published in Leszno, Poland, intended to educate infants. This publication made the family an important part of the popular education system and brought Comenius the attention of other educators. He began writing books of the same kind for the Czech public, worked on a Latin Czech glossary, and continued to improve over the course of forty years, which may be assumed to have laid the foundations for his later attempts to create works in a style similar to *Orbis Pictus*.

[19] The Battle of White Mountain, fought on 8 November 1620 near Prague, marked a decisive turning point in the Thirty Years' War. Imperial Catholic forces under Count Tilly crushed the Bohemian Protestant army, ending the short-lived reign of the Protestant 'Winter King' Frederick V. The defeat led to the forcible re-Catholicization of Bohemia and Moravia, mass exile of Protestant nobility and clergy, and the suppression of Czech cultural and religious life under Habsburg rule. For communities such as the Moravian Brethren, it meant expulsion from their homeland.

[20] Leszno is a town in western Poland, in the Greater Poland Voivodeship, which was the principal refuge of the exiled Unity of Brethren after the Battle of White Mountain (1620).

Comenius met Samuel Hartlib [21], who played an important role in his later development. Hartlib was an enthusiastic supporter of Comenius's educational ideas. Comenius was invited to London in 1641–1642, in hopes of establishing a universal language project (seeking *Real Character*, further elaborated in the next section). Although the project failed due to the outbreak of the English Civil War, Hartlib published several of Comenius's works in England. Comenius had begun exploring world languages ever since. With the assistance of Hartlib, Comenius began work on *the Via Lucis (The Way of Light)* in order to make true knowledge available to all and completed it on 8 April 1642 (Sadler, 2013).

Comenius entered the service of Sweden at the invitation of Louis De Geer in June 1642, after the Irish Rebellion began in November 1641. During his six years of service to Sweden, he wrote a Latin textbook titled *Methodus Novissima Linguarum (New Methods of Language Teaching)*. In 1650, Prince Sigismund Rákóczi of Transylvania invited him to Sárospatak. Initially, he had received encouragement and progressed well in school. But Prince Rákóczi and his wife perished just a few months after their wedding (Sadler, 2013). As a result of this loss of support, the new headmaster, who initially appeared cooperative, became jealous, and the teachers began to lose interest in a programme they did not fully understand. Comenius thought they were being lazy, but the problem was that many of the pupils could barely read, and with so many delays in getting textbooks printed, Comenius realised that they had to have something much simpler, and he began to formally prepare a picture book for them, which would become the world-famous *Orbis Pictus*. He said it was a book for young children or those who were 'flickering wits' (Capková, 1970, p. 14). *Orbis Pictus* was not fully printed because there were not enough professional woodcarvers at the

[21] Samuel Hartlib (c.1600–1662) was a Polish-born intellectual broker based in England, renowned for promoting educational reform, agricultural improvement, and poor relief, and for maintaining a vast correspondence network linking the leading scientific and philosophical minds of Protestant Europe.

time, and it was not officially released until 1658 in Nuremberg. His final move was to Amsterdam in 1656, where he died in November 1670. In this period, he published *the Opera Didactica Omnia* and devoted himself to reworking and editing his previous works, as well as to appealing for political and religious peace and universal reforms.

Comenius' life and work could be assumed to have been affected by the conflict between religion and the state. Comenius witnessed the plight of his country and family during the upheaval, and these experiences shaped his philosophical views on education and his writings. As a political and religious immigrant from 1628 to his death in 1670, the pressures of state and religious forces largely determined his aspirations, actions, and words, and all of this is reflected in his works, including his teaching works. All of Comenius' activities were linked to political and religious endeavours according to the spirit of humanism. During this period, many Central European philosophers were often poorly paid or even obscure. Many of them taught at little-known institutions, published a few books and pamphlets, and were then ignored for centuries (Freedman, 2024). Comenius was no exception. Most of Comenius' manuscripts were lost in the war and did not attract much public attention at the time. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the correspondence of Comenius and his scholarly circle began to be systematically collected and edited, beginning with the editions prepared by Czech scholars such as Adolf Patera and Jan Kvačala (Urbánek, n.d.). Since then, many scholars have read and discussed Comenius' writings. James Bowen (1967), for example, noted that Comenius' work covered a wide range of topics, including animal and insect species, human occupations and organisations, and moral qualities, with themes ranging from God and creation to the Last Judgement. He also mentions that Comenius, a Moravian scholar, appears to have been the first to use drawings to teach vocabulary for learning a foreign language, and that he added annotations to the pictorial features, which were printed side by side in Latin and German. Moreover, as Beales (1970) has

argued, reprints of this long-out-of-print and extremely rare classic have been as popular as the corresponding historical reprints issued by the Gregg and Cass Press.

4.1.3.2. Educational Philosophy of Comenius

In another work, *the Great Didac*tic, Comenius introduced his principle of *Pansophy*, which advocated teaching everything to everyone (Comenius, 1910). Pansophy (from the Latin word Pansophia) is derived from the Greek words 'pan' (all) and 'sophia' (wisdom). For Comenius, Pansophy refers to the holistic development of intellect through educational opportunities that enable all people to acquire a wide and comprehensive range of knowledge (Comenius, 1910). His goal was a 'universal wisdom of life' that was broader and deeper than the knowledge found in the common textbooks or encyclopaedias of his day. He advocated the harmonious development of humanity through education, believing that education would help foster social harmony and promote equality among nations and denominations.

One of the main principles of Pansophy is to ensure that everyone has access to information that benefits them (Comenius, 1910). In practice, Comenius' original demand was for everyone to attend school, ensuring comprehensive education and learning, although this commitment to universal education ran counter to the systems of the time, especially those of the Jesuits, who were often associated with the elite of society (Sadler, 2013).

This vision of universal schooling did not arise in isolation; it drew on several formative influences, the first and most direct being the tradition of the Unity of the Brethren. As evidenced by his treatment of early childhood education in Comenius' writings, the system he advocated always placed great importance on the education of young children. It can be supposed that this owes much to the theory and practice of the *Unity of the Brethren*, the religious group into which Comenius was born. The *Unity of the Brethren* was a Protestant group in the Czech lands where people lived

together in brotherly and sisterly solidarity. In the 15th and 16th centuries, they were harassed and, at times, banned from establishing schools. To preserve their traditions and ideals, they developed the concept of home education (Sadler, 2013). Therefore, the *Unity of the Brethren* has long been concerned about early childhood education and considers it extremely important, which could be assumed to have heavily influenced Comenius' beliefs in educating children.

Comenius undoubtedly also gained the belief that education had a broad social function from the *Unity of the Brethren*. They followed John Hus's view that all human beings are created in the image of God and therefore have the same right (and obligation) to be educated, to develop their gifts, and to continue learning throughout their lives (Capková, 1970). This idea was further explored in the *Instauration Of The Image of God* by Johann Heinrich Alsted, based on Bartholomäus Keckermann's *Systematic Presentation of His Encyclopaedia* (Hotson, 2000, p. 67), which could be assumed to have contributed to the understanding of his student, Comenius.

This conviction that all are made in the image of God points beyond the Brethren's institutional practice to the deeper religious worldview that underpinned it. Comenius' family background and learning experiences show that his ideas, outlook on life, and values were closely linked to Christianity (Sadler, 2013). The Christian viewpoint was an important ideological basis for Comenius' philosophy of education. In the opening chapter of *Orbis Pictus*, Comenius highlights the image of God and emphasises the narrative of God and Adam naming the animals and the world (Comenius, 1910). This demonstrates Comenius' integration of religious philosophy into everyday education, highlighting the belief that God both created and named the world and emphasising that, to understand the world, one must grasp its fundamentals. This approach originated in a historical context in which the Catholic Church's monopoly power was continually challenged by the Protestant Reformation, which encouraged individuals to acquire true knowledge of the world, including the

Bible and religious matters (Sadler, 2013). It could be assumed that the commitment on both sides to religious devotion and the compulsory study of the Bible and its theological principles provided Comenius with a large number of supporters for his view of education.

From this religious worldview, it followed that for Comenius, if the universe is a harmonious whole, then all manifestations of the human person, as a microcosmic reflection of the macrocosm, should also form a harmonious unity. This idea led Comenius to the conclusion that the training of the body and senses, the training of speech and activity, the training of reason, the training of morality, and the training of piety should be harmonious. He endeavoured to draw inspiration for his ideas from the natural world, not only for the study of nature but also for the betterment of man himself and of human affairs in the world. Each field had its own set of rules and structure, and the basic principles of education could be imitated and studied in accordance with the laws of nature. These ideas had a major impact on him, shaping his views on education (Comenius, 1910). These theories are reflected in the book *Orbis Pictus*, and one of the goals of education is for a person to acquire, from infancy onwards and as they go through further stages of development, the 'universal wisdom of life', i.e., an understanding of the basic things about nature, human society and God. In his book, Comenius sought to facilitate this process at an early stage (Comenius, 1910).

Comenius' trip to London could help us understand his interest in promoting *pansophy and real character.* In his paper *Comenius and the Real Character in England*, Benjamin DeMott (1955) provides a detailed account of how scholars and philosophers sought to identify and explore the *real character*. This exploration has deep biblical roots, as it aims to recover the original language that God gave to Adam, the first man (Mungello, 1988). By the seventeenth century, characters had already been designed and promoted primarily in close association with politics and religion.

For example, words to be taught, like 'God' and 'Devil', were selected from the Bible. Many scholars of the same period were interested in this subject. For example, in Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* (1605, as cited by DeMott in 1955), Bacon said that the kingdoms of China write in solid characters, which express neither letters nor words in gross, but things or concepts. He concludes this section by saying that written language and written texts far surpass all other forms, though he does not encourage the creation of a new philosophical vocabulary (DeMott, 1955). Comenius was one of the first few writers to do so. One of the earliest major treatises on *Real Character* can be referred to his book *The Way of Light*, which had already circulated in manuscript form by Comenius in England by 1641. In *The Way of Light*, Comenius further explored the reconfiguration of language and script to resolve religious and political differences by creating a new universal language. He suggested that symbolic characters be used to enhance communication among speakers of diverse languages, enabling individuals who cannot speak directly to understand one another (DeMott, 1955). Comenius believed that a linguistic system based on *Real Character* could better convey ideas and the nature of things, thereby helping to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts. Comenius makes it clear in this work that he intends to modify Bacon's idea of *Real Character* in order to provide new perspectives and alternatives that Bacon had not considered. He claims that the recently discovered knowledge of the symbolic characters used by the Chinese brought a pleasing light because they facilitate understanding between people who use different languages (DeMott, 1955).

Following Bacon, he also refers to the idea that a large number of characters are required (DeMott, 1955). He then raises questions that Bacon had not mentioned,

> 'If this [Chinese character] is a good thing and seems to be advantageous, why should we not rather devote ourselves studiously to the discovery of a Real Language (which all men should

> equally understand, whether their business be done with the tongue or with the hand) and, at the same time, discover ideas, but also the truth of things themselves? If the creation of multiple languages is accidental or simply confusing, why can't a language be created through a methodical, purposeful process that is both elegant and intelligent? If we can adapt our concepts of things to their form, why not allow us to fit language to the more exact expression of more exact concepts?' (Comenius, 1938, as cited in DeMott, 1955, p. 1070)

Accordingly, a tentative plan is based on observations of differences between the Chinese writing system and alphabetic systems. Compared with alphabetic systems, Chinese characters are often described as logograms or ideograms, meaning that the Chinese writing system typically represents a whole idea or object with each symbol rather than each sound, as in alphabetic languages. Although Comenius is not known to have written any studies or reflections directly related to Chinese characters, Bacon's views on the subject sparked interest in academic circles about a universal language, which in turn led to Comenius being invited to London to participate in discussions and efforts concerning the Real Character.

According to DeMott's (1955) account in his paper, although no book on the universal language had been published in England before Comenius' visit to London in 1641, one or more of the proponents of the new language in England independently picked up hints about the *Real Character* from Bacon's discourse and continued their work without realising what Comenius had said in *The Way of Light*. Later, Hartlib, Britain's most ardent advocate of the study of new languages, corresponded with Comenius for many years about the linguistic programme and played a key role in bringing Comenius to Britain, where the main goal was to accelerate the progress of human knowledge. However, he was particularly concerned with a second objective, the

promotion of religious harmony. At the beginning of Christian history, 'men were divided into parties and sects, which led to rivalries and doctrinal disputes that were later perpetuated by the application, interpretation, debasing, and twisting of truth' (Comenius, 1938, as cited in DeMott, 1955, p. 1073). This is not only unfortunate but also unnecessary. Since all men are 'necessarily united in these roots of the general intelligence of mankind, they share the same 'innate principles' of knowing, willing, and achieving… (Then), when language discovers the proportions between sounds and things… and harmony is restored, these arguments will end (Comenius, 1938, as cited in DeMott, 1955, p. 1073). Accordingly, DeMott claimed that these men, like Comenius, saw the creation of a new language as a way of resolving long-standing religious conflicts, not merely as a valuable tool for scholars of natural philosophy (DeMott, 1955).

After this, in this exploration of *Real Character*, Comenius remained in England for 10 months; his ideas were well supported by Hartlib, who led a discussion of *Real Character*. However, this exploration was aborted due to the Civil War, though many valuable works[22] containing these ideas were published and preserved (DeMott, 1955). For example, *Orbis Pictus*, published in 1658 as an attempt by Comenius to identify *Real Character*, selected words corresponding to a wide range of basic concepts and everyday matters, from the natural world to society and technology, and was discussed in the earlier sections of this chapter. In doing so, alongside the title of this book, Comenius sought to provide children with the most necessary and

[22] One of the most widely known of John Wilkins' many works is An Essay into the Language of *Real Character* and Philosophy (Wilkins, 1968), in which he elaborated a new universal language, intended primarily to facilitate international communication among scholars, but also envisaged for the use of diplomats, travellers, and merchants. Further, among all those attempting, Comenius wrote the famous book Via Lucis (The Way of Light) for Samuel Hartlib in 1641, which starts with 5,000 root words (Sadler, 2013). The book sought a way for everyone to gain true knowledge. Following basic metaphysical concepts, rather than sentences, he dedicated the book to the Royal Society of London in 1668.

essential requirements for understanding the real world. These are the educational philosophies and concepts of Comenius that have already explored, which will serve as a conceptual lens to guide the subsequent chapters in analysing *Orbis Pictus* using the 5W1H framework.

To put his ideas into practice, Comenius produced what might be called a textbook (although it was not his first publication in this field), aimed at young children but also suitable for some preschool children. The book, which he named '*Orbis Sensualium Pictus*' (often shortened to *Orbis Pictus*), consists of various objects in the world. Everything depicted in the book is given a name, and the ideas range from very simple to complex, from real to abstract. These things and phenomena, at least most of them, are presented in such a way that children can notice the connections between them and the progression always from lower to higher states. Children are quick to distinguish not only the kinds of plants and animals but also the kinds of men and women and their behaviour. Comenius believed that the world was a harmonious whole, created by a perfect God, and that all his writings were permeated and filled with religious overtones in accordance with his view of the ultimate purpose of life. Comenius was convinced that man could be educated. For him, the whole process of human acquisition of knowledge had a moral purpose (Comenius, 1910). If children realise that human beings are not only masters of nature through their own labours but also masters of themselves, i.e., control their own actions, then they have laid a solid foundation for forming a worldview.

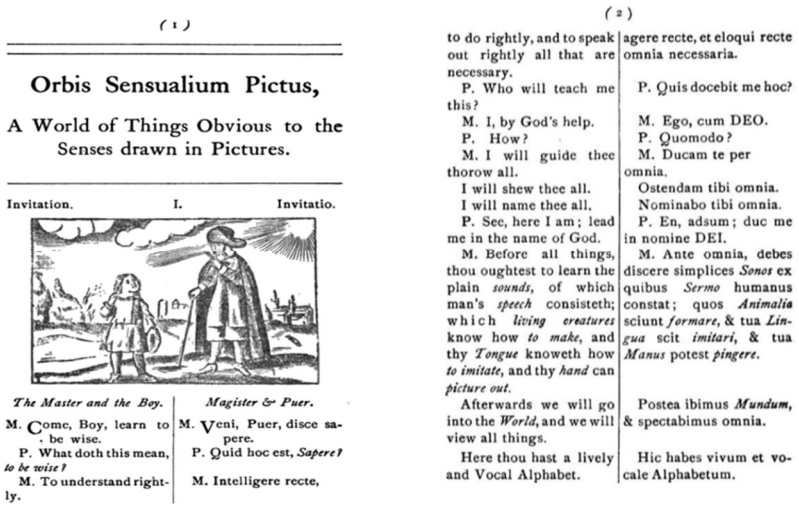
4.2. Pedagogical Analysis Using the 5W1H Framework

Having introduced Comenius' life and academic trajectory, as well as his educational philosophy and philosophical reflections, which can serve as the hermeneutic background necessary for interpreting the pedagogical meanings represented in the

text. In the following sections, the thesis focuses on the pedagogical elements of the text, analysing it through the lens of the 5W1H framework introduced earlier (Section 3.2). Specifically, Section 4.2.1 explores the role of the educator (who) in the context of Comenius' time when using this book, positioned at the top of the pedagogical triangle. In Section 4.2.2, by analysing the recipient of the teachers' instruction, the role of the student to be educated by *Orbis Pictus* is explored.

In Section 4.2.3, a detailed analysis of the five improvable relations in *Orbis Pictus* (What) is conducted. As introduced in Chapter 2, the five improvable relations are the relations between students and sound, words, discourse, action, and world order. In Section 4.2.3, from Section 4.2.3.1 to 4.2.3.5, I discuss each of these improvable relations in the following order: what relation is expected to improve (What), expected outcome of this improvement (into What), in what way (how), and an assumption of the broader goal or purpose of using this book (Why).

Before discussing the individual elements, I would like to highlight the introductory preface of *Orbis Pictus*, in which Comenius reveals his idea of the pedagogical relationship between the educator and students, as shown below (Comenius, 1887; see Figure 10).



(1)

Orbis Sensualium Pictus,

A World of Things Obvious to the Senses drawn in Pictures.

Invitation. I. Invitatio.

The Master and the Boy.	*Magister & Puer.*
M. Come, Boy, learn to be wise.	M. Veni, Puer, disce sapere.
P. What doth this mean, *to be wise?*	P. Quid hoc est, *Sapere?*
M. To understand rightly.	M. Intelligere recte,

(2)

to do rightly, and to speak out rightly all that are necessary.	agere recte, et eloqui recte omnia necessaria.
P. Who will teach me this?	P. Quis docebit me hoc?
M. I, by God's help.	M. Ego, cum DEO.
P. How?	P. Quomodo?
M. I will guide thee thorow all.	M. Ducam te per omnia.
I will shew thee all.	Ostendam tibi omnia.
I will name thee all.	Nominabo tibi omnia.
P. See, here I am; lead me in the name of God.	P. En, adsum; duc me in nomine DEI.
M. Before all things, thou oughtest to learn the plain *sounds*, of which man's *speech* consisteth; which *living creatures* know how *to make*, and thy *Tongue* knoweth how *to imitate*, and thy *hand* can *picture out*.	M. Ante omnia, debes discere simplices *Sonos* ex quibus *Sermo* humanus constat; quos *Animalia* sciunt *formare*, & tua *Lingua* scit *imitari*, & tua *Manus* potest *pingere*.
Afterwards we will go into the *World*, and we will view all things.	Postea ibimus *Mundum*, & spectabimus omnia.
Here thou hast a lively and Vocal Alphabet.	Hic habes vivum et vocale Alphabetum.

Figure 10: Chapter 1 of Orbis Pictus. From Orbis Sensualium Pictus (pp. 1–2), by J. A. Comenius, 1887. Public domain.

In the top half of the first page, it can be seen on the left of the page that the title of this book (see Figure 10) is *Orbis Sensualium Pictus,* and the subtitle is *'A World of Things Obvious to the Senses Drawn in Pictures'*, and thus it can be infered that this book aims to present the whole perceivable world to the readers through pictures and texts (Comenius, 1910). The part on the right of this page is an illustrated picture accompanied by bilingual text in English and Latin. This picture shows two people: a master and a boy. The man is wearing a cap and a cloak and clutching a stick or pointer. The youngster is standing to the left of the man and staring up at him with interest. The background is a plain landscape with a few trees and houses.

The next part is a textual conversation between the man and the boy. The left column is in English, and the right column is in Latin. In this conversation in both English and Latin, the Master tells the schoolchild, 'Come, my child, learn how to be wise.' The student asks, 'What does it mean to be wise?' The Master replies, 'To understand correctly.' On the right-hand page, the Master continues, 'To understand rightly, to do rightly, to say rightly all that is necessary.' The student asked, 'Who will teach me?' The Master replies, 'Me, by God's help.' The student asked again, 'How will I be taught?' The Master says, 'I will tell you everything.' The student answers, 'See, here

I am; guide me in the name of God.' The Master continued, 'Before all things, you should learn the ordinary sounds of which the language of men is composed; the creatures know how to make them, your tongue knows how to imitate them, and your hands are able to depict them. After that, we will enter the world and view all things. Here you have a vivid and sonorous alphabet.'

From the brief description above, it can be seen that this page sets the tone for the whole book. It firstly illustrates the pedagogical relation between the Master (educator) and the Boy (learner). In this picture, the Master points in a direction and tries to show something to the Boy, while the Boy looks at the Master with reverence, in a conversation between the two, with the picture and text serving as a teaching aid. By presenting this content in both English and Latin, the author Comenius aims to provide education in both languages and to prepare students for their future lives through language study. In general, the picture and the text in this chapter together introduce the teaching method and principle of this book, which emphasise educating students under the educator's guidance, with the help of God, to understand, do, and speak rightly in a religious context in Comenius' time.

Based on this pedagogical relation between the educator and the learner, the following section provides a detailed pedagogical interpretation of the Book of *Orbis Pictus*, using the previously outlined 5W1H framework as its structure and hermeneutics as its method of interpretation, starting with the first question: Who is the educator in the book *Orbis Pictus*?

4.2.1. Who: The Role of the Educator in *Orbis Pictus*



Invitation. I. Invitatio.

The Master and the Boy.

M. Come, Boy, learn to be wise.

P. What doth this mean, *to be wise?*

M. To understand rightly.

Magister & Puer.

M. Veni, Puer, disce sapere.

P. Quid hoc est, *Sapere?*

M. Intelligere recte,

Figure 11: The opening 'Invitation / Invitatio' page from the English–Latin edition of Orbis Sensualium Pictus, showing the master and the boy. Reproduced from Comenius (1887), edited by C. W. Bardeen.



Invitation. I. *Invitatio.*

The Master and the Boy.

M. *Come, Boy, learn to be wise.*

P. *What doth this mean,* to be wise?

M. *To understand rightly,*

Magister & Puer.

M. Veni, Puer, disce sapere.

P. Quid hoc est, *Sapere?*

M. Intelligere rectè,

B agere

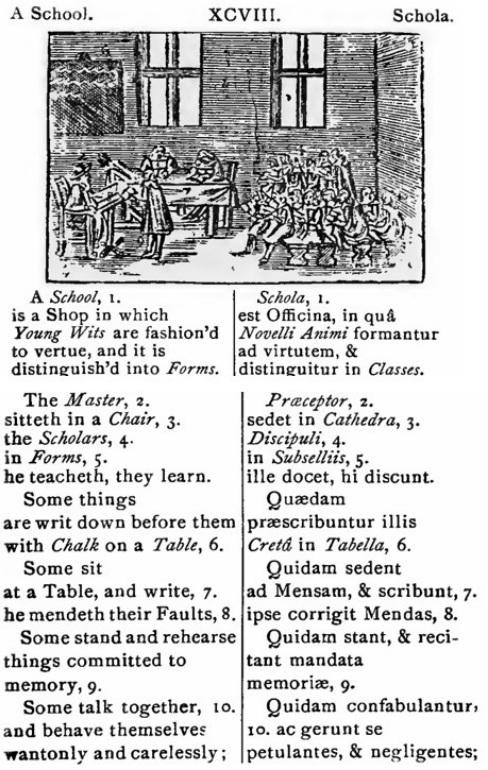
Figure 12: The opening 'Invitation / Invitatio' page from the 1659 English–Latin edition of Orbis Sensualium Pictus, depicting the master and the boy in the opening pedagogical dialogue. Reproduced from Comenius (1659), translated by Charles Hoole.



Figure 13: The opening 'Invitatio / Einleitung' page from the Latin–German edition of Orbis Sensualium Pictus, showing the teacher inviting the child to learn wisdom. Reproduced from Comenius (1658, p. 2), digitised by Wikisource.

The three pictures (see Figures 11, 12, 13) above show three different versions of *Orbis Pictus* from the same chapter, *Invitation*, at the beginning of the book. It can be seen that although the text content may remain consistent across different editions, the pictures vary; this is most likely because modern picture-reproduction technology had not yet been developed at the time, so the pictures in each edition were redrawn from scratch. Although these three versions are not identical in details such as the Master's hat and costume (cavalier, flat cap and fur hat), the difference in the standing position with the Boy (there are two people who are both standing in the two pictures, and also one who is standing and one who is sitting in the other picture), and the environments in which they are located are not exactly the same (wilderness and housing area), there is a unifying theme to these images, that is, the Master and the Boy looking at each other, with the Master holding up a finger and saying something, and the Boy listening intently. The illustrations and text present the Master (teacher) as older and taller than the Boy and depict him pointing and giving directions as he

interacts with the Boy. This is also textually reemphasised in Chapter 98, where the Master sits in a chair and guides and corrects the learners.



A School. XCVIII. Schola.

A *School*, 1. is a Shop in which *Young Wits* are fashion'd to vertue, and it is distinguish'd into *Forms*.

Schola, 1. est Officina, in quâ *Novelli Animi* formantur ad virtutem, & distinguitur in *Classes*.

The *Master*, 2. sitteth in a *Chair*, 3. the *Scholars*, 4. in *Forms*, 5. he teacheth, they learn.

Præceptor, 2. sedet in *Cathedra*, 3. *Discipuli*, 4. in *Subselliis*, 5. ille docet, hi discunt.

Some things are writ down before them with *Chalk* on a *Table*, 6.

Quædam præscribuntur illis *Cretâ* in *Tabella*, 6.

Some sit at a Table, and write, 7. he mendeth their Faults, 8.

Quidam sedent ad Mensam, & scribunt, 7. ipse corrigit Mendas, 8.

Some stand and rehearse things committed to memory, 9.

Quidam stant, & recitant mandata memoriæ, 9.

Some talk together, 10. and behave themselves wantonly and carelessly;

Quidam confabulantur, 10. ac gerunt se petulantes, & negligentes;

Figure 14: Chapter 98 (A School) of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (p. 196), C. W. Bardeen (Ed.), 1887, C. W. Bardeen. Public domain

In Chapter 98, Comenius depicts a scene of a teacher and students in school. In the descriptive text (see Figure 14), Comenius describes what a classroom in a school looks like and how teachers and pupils learn within it. For instance, the text says that something is written down with chalk on a table; some pupils sit at a table and write; the master corrects the pupils' mistakes; and some pupils recite what they have committed to memory (Comenius, 1887). At the same time, Comenius points out in the text that a school is a place for shaping and improving virtue, and not merely for imparting knowledge (Comenius, 1887). The above pictures and texts depict what Comenius thought around the 17th century, when master teachers were an important part of the religious and philosophical education system. As shown in the picture, they generally used oral instruction to guide students in studying the Bible or classical works such as *Orbis Pictus*.

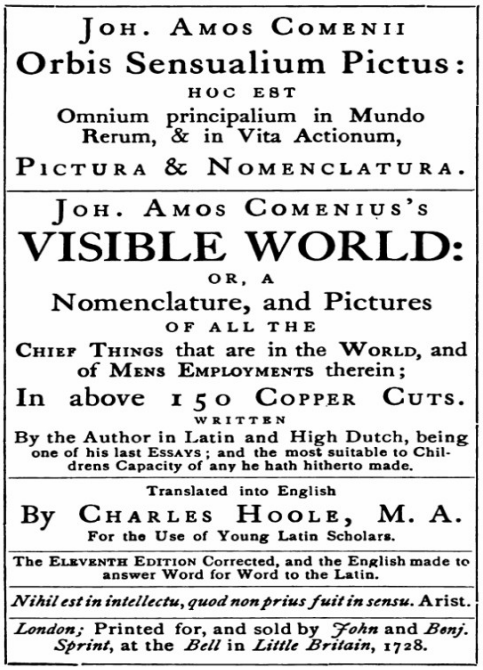
The above discusses the visual image of the teacher depicted in the opening chapters of *Orbis Pictus*. However, this is not the only way in which an educator appears. As argued in section 3.2.2, this thesis holds that, in interpreting the two books, the educators are voices (who may be the author or the teacher) conveying their thoughts through the books. Therefore, based on this understanding, the educator in *Orbis*

Pictus implies at least three layers of this role. The one depicted in the picture explained above, as the first layer, is usually the teacher in the classroom in practice, or the parent who uses *Orbis Pictus* to teach their children, who has the right to select particular chapters and methods with flexibility for their own reasons and purposes. The second layer is that the educator is represented by Comenius as the author and designer of the book, who selected and organised the aspects he wished to present to the children. Further, as the master tells the boy that he will teach him with God's help, this imbues the educational process with a religious dimension, suggesting that the third layer of the educator is represented by God as an authority figure who also offers educational guidance to the children.

Taken together, these layers show that the educator in *Orbis Pictus* is a structured pedagogical role that selects and orders the world, invites the learner into it, and does so under divine authority.

4.2.2. Whom: The Role of the Learner in *Orbis Pictus*

Having discussed the role of the educator, this section now turns to the question of who the learners are in *Orbis Pictus*. To determine for whom this book is intended to educate, some clues can be found in the text.



JOH. AMOS COMENII
Orbis Sensualium Pictus:
HOC EST
Omnium principalium in Mundo Rerum, & in Vita Actionum,
PICTURA & NOMENCLATURA.

JOH. AMOS COMENIUS'S
VISIBLE WORLD:
OR, A
Nomenclature, and Pictures
OF ALL THE
CHIEF THINGS that are in the WORLD, and of MENS EMPLOYMENTS therein;
In above 150 COPPER CUTS.
WRITTEN
By the Author in Latin and High Dutch, being one of his last ESSAYS; and the most suitable to Childrens Capacity of any he hath hitherto made.

Translated into English
By CHARLES HOOLE, M. A.
For the Use of Young Latin Scholars.

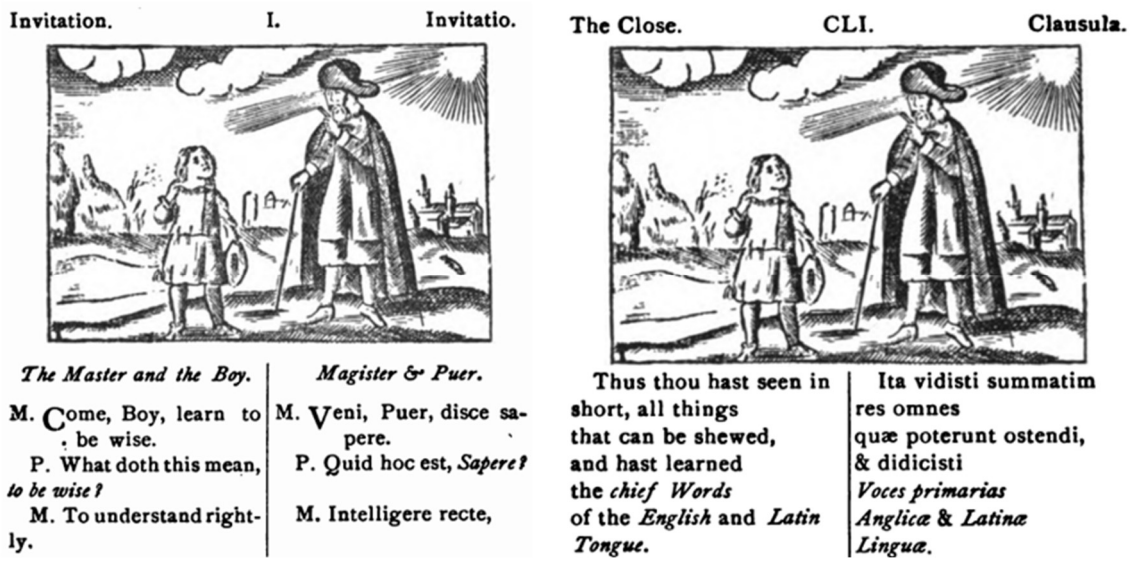
The ELEVENTH EDITION Corrected, and the English made to answer Word for Word to the Latin.

Nihil est in intellectu, quod non prius fuit in sensu. Arist.

London; Printed for, and sold by *John* and *Benj. Sprint*, at the *Bell* in *Little Britain*, 1728.

Figure 15: Orbis Sensualium Pictus, eleventh English edition (Comenius, 1728): title page, the opening chapter (Invitation), and the closing chapter (The Close).

According to Charles Hoole, the English translator of the 1728/1887 version, in addition to being an educational classic of prime importance, *Orbis Pictus* is also the first picture book ever made for children and has been the most popular textbook in Europe for a century (Comenius, 1887). Additionally, on the cover of the 1728 version translated by Hoole (see Figure 15), signs of the book's target audience can be seen. First, from the second column (count from the top to the bottom), it says 'the most suitable for children's capacity of any he hath hitherto made'. Then, in the column below, it says 'For the Use of Young Latin Scholars'.



Invitation. I. Invitatio.

The Master and the Boy.

M. Come, Boy, learn to be wise.
P. What doth this mean, *to be wise?*
M. To understand rightly.

Magister & Puer.

M. Veni, Puer, disce sapere.
P. Quid hoc est, *Sapere?*
M. Intelligere recte,

The Close. CLI. Clausula.

Thus thou hast seen in short, all things that can be shewed, and hast learned the *chief Words* of the *English* and *Latin Tongue.*

Ita vidisti summatim res omnes quæ poterunt ostendi, & didicisti *Voces primarias Anglicæ* & *Latinæ Linguæ.*

Figure 16: The opening (Invitation, Chapter 1) and closing (The Close, Chapter 151) chapters of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (Trans.; C. W. Bardeen, Ed.), 1887, C. W. Bardeen. Public domain.

In the Author's Preface to the Reader, the author (Comenius) says,

> "Which, because it is commonly neglected in schools, and the things which are to be learnt are offered to scholars without being understood or being rightly presented to the senses, it cometh to pass that the work of teaching and learning goeth heavily onward, and affordeth little benefit" (Comenius, 1887, p. xiv).

Following this paragraph, he continues,

> "See here then a new help for schools, A Picture and Nomenclature of all the chief things in the world, and of men's actions in their way of living: Which, that you, good Masters, may not be loath to run over with your scholars, I will tell you, in short, what good you may expect from it" (Comenius, 1887, p. xiv).

In the main part of the book, from both pictures of the first Chapter 'Invitation' (middle picture above), and the last Chapter 'The Close' (right picture above), it can be seen a child figure who is standing to the left of the man, looking up at him attentively and being called 'boy' in the descriptive text.

Combining the above text and picture descriptions from the book (see Figure 16), it can roughly be deduced that Comenius intended this book to be used for teaching people who read this book, including scholars and youngsters, and according to the editor Charles Hoole's comments, it was well-suited for children and young scholars (Comenius, 1887). Comenius positioned *Orbis Pictus* as a picture book to be put directly into children's hands (Comenius, 1887) to help young learners learn through real-life themes and systematically organise the content to introduce them to the world. In this book, Comenius transitions the focus of children's education from traditional Biblical education to the practical elements of nature, society, and personal experience. Comenius believed that it was necessary to educate students to follow

the laws of nature and provide education at the most appropriate time, such as during their adolescence (Comenius, 1887). In studying *Orbis Pictus*, students were guided and organised by their teachers, as Comenius said, to touch with their hands, see with their eyes, and feel with their senses the things of the world so that they could learn true knowledge.

Since education in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was mainly provided for the children of the upper class, it was more in the form of court and home education rather than public education. Comenius attached great importance to education for all as a key means of achieving universal education. Comenius believed that education was feasible and important for all people, regardless of their intelligence and ability, status and cultural condition, gender, or religious beliefs (Comenius, 1910). He refuted the idea that 'those who are born stupid are incapable of education' and the assertion that 'although there are differences in human intelligence at birth, there is not a single person in the world whose intelligence is so low as to be incapable of education' (Comenius, 1910, p. 69). A point that needs to be emphasised here is that this pedagogical approach is based on the premise that students should already have some understanding of the world, or they will not be able to build bridges of understanding.

Comenius' views on the pursuit of knowledge, good morals, and faith also express the understanding of the nature of the world that he wanted to convey to children. He saw the importance of education for moral standards, especially for children, which he further explained in his famous book, *Great Didactic* (Comenius, 1910). According to Comenius, children are not yet as morally damaged by the world as adults are and are therefore more likely to follow a righteous lifestyle. Childhood is seen as a primitive state of simplicity, gentleness, modesty, and purity. Childhood is also considered the most important formative stage in life from a physiological perspective, especially in terms of learning, acquiring knowledge, developing good social

behaviour, and cultivating morality and piety (Comenius, 1910). Comenius even believed that it was dangerous not to educate children because of their vulnerability in the world. He therefore emphasised that the education of children should take place first and foremost in the family, and because the human world had become so complex, the church and society also need to establish schools with good teachers to support these efforts for children (Comenius, 1910).

Overall, through the lens of these works, it can be inferred that Comenius wrote this book for the learners represented as children and young scholars. They are supposed to be capable of absorbing the knowledge imparted by their teachers and can be guided to develop a better relation with certain aspects such as language, objects, actions and the world. Just as with the image of the 'boy' in the opening chapter, *Invitation*, he asked his teachers questions, listened to their teachings, and accepted guidance from both his teachers and God. In this sense, the learner in *Orbis Pictus* is portrayed as someone who has not yet properly understood the world, but who is capable of being guided towards a correct understanding, correct speech and correct action. This understanding of the learner provides the basis for the following analysis of the five improvable relations constructed in *Orbis Pictus*.

with a preliminary understanding of the educator and the students being educated through *Orbis Pictus*, the discussion now turns to the focus on what is intended to be educated.

4.2.3. Intended Outcomes in *Orbis Pictus*: A Relational Interpretation

In the previous section, this thesis explored the contextual background of *Orbis Pictus*, meaning where and when education takes place, and answered two of the 5W1H questions: who educates and who is educated. Now the discussion turns to the other four questions in the order of what relation is to be improved, into what, how it is

improved, and why it is worth improving. The latter three questions (into what, how and why) are directly bound up with the first (what). Therefore, following the analysis procedure outlined in Section 3.5, I pre-select five improvable relations to serve as representative illustrations of the pedagogical principles and intentions that are embodied in *Orbis Pictus*. Specifically, they are the Relation 1 between the student and the sounds of the language's alphabetic letters, the Relation 2 between the student and words, the Relation 3 between the student and discourse, the Relation 4 between the student and their actions, and the Relation 5 between the student and the world order. In the analysis of each improvable relation (what), expected changes in the students' relation (into what), as well as how and why this relation is improved (how and why), will be discussed for each relation separately based on selected sample chapters from the book.

The discussion now begins with the first relation, the relation between the student and the sounds of the alphabetic letters of language, to explore what and how the author has intended to educate students.

4.2.3.1. From Pictures to Alphabet: Linking Symbols and the Sounds through Familiar Experiences

4.2.3.1.1. Description of the Sample Chapters

At the beginning of the main part of the book, the 'Lively and Vocal Alphabet' (see Figure 17) serves as a foundation for language learning. Comenius sets up the alphabet list here to help students understand letter sounds before moving on to more complex subjects. These two pages prepare students for language learning by illustrating the letters of the alphabet in accordance with the sounds made by various animals (see the picture below). A list of twenty-four letters, both upper- and lowercase, is presented, along with their Latin names (in italics), English names (in

bold), and onomatopoeic sounds (in lowercase letters). Each animal has a call that represents its traits, which reinforces the phoneme pattern by making natural connections. For example, the first alphabetic letter Comenius introduced is the letter 'Aa', which is the onomatopoeic representation of the sound of 'à à', and the name of the corresponding sound of the animal in the illustrated picture is Cornix cornicatur (in Latin) or Crow (in English). This arrangement is pedagogically logical because it begins with a picture of animals in the world and then proceeds to the printed letter. It then combines this with the natural sound of the animals that they have heard (or possibly the teacher's mimicry of the animals' noises), with the sound of the letter.

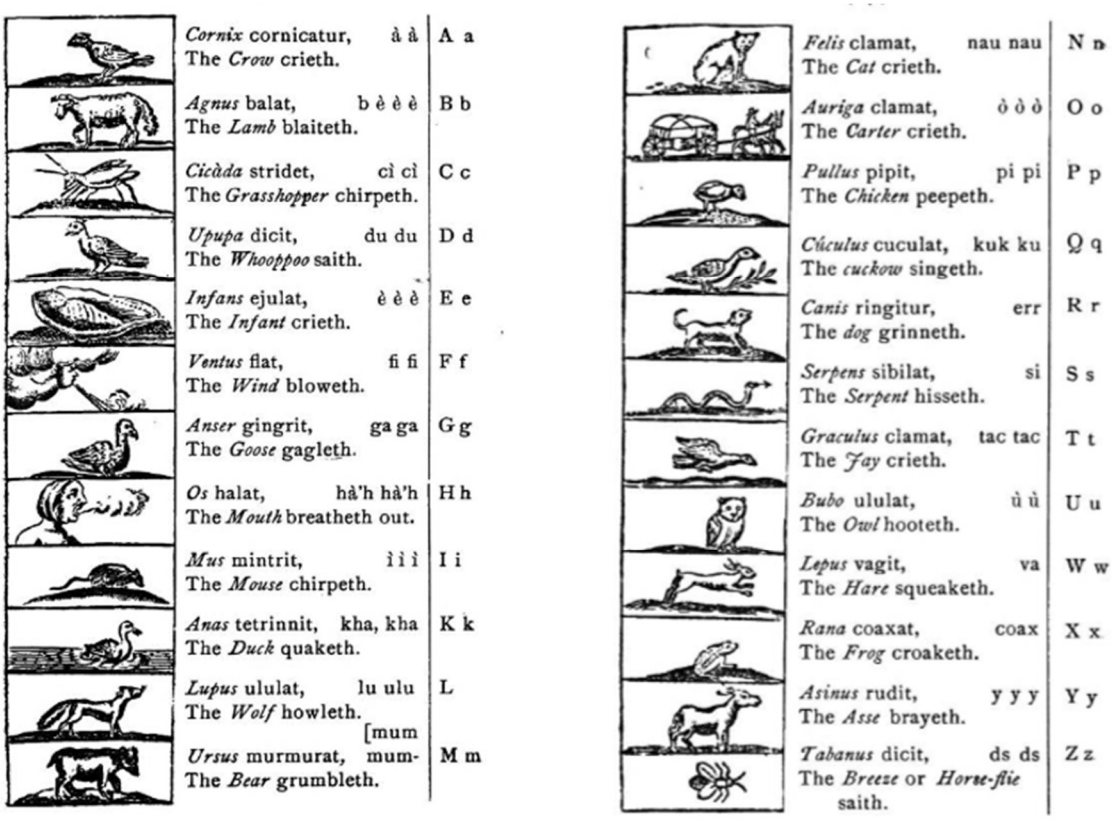


Figure 17: The 'Living Alphabet' from Orbis Pictus (Comenius, 1887). Public domain.

4.2.3.1.2. What Relation is Intended to be Improved

The alphabet chapter aims to improve the relation between the child and the foundational sounds of written language. According to Comenius (1887, p.1), before learning anything else, students should first learn the simple sounds of human speech, sounds that everyone can make, so that their tongues can imitate them and their hands can represent them, before they enter the wider world and observe all things. If the sound of alphabetic letters (in this case represented by the noises of animals) can be considered the most basic component of human speech then alphabetic instruction must be foundational, preceding all other literacy skills.

As established in the previous section, the teacher plays an active and deliberate role in mediating this relation by selecting, presenting and pacing the material in accordance with the readiness of the child. In the alphabet chapter, this role is especially important as the learner depends entirely on the teacher to bring the sounds, images and letters to life. This figure connects each letter to a picture and a sound, allowing students to learn in multiple ways. Using sound effects that prompt students to recall real animal noises helps them connect what Comenius thinks children already know (animal sounds) with what they don't yet know (letters and how they sound, i.e., how they are pronounced in reading), which is a key step towards reading and writing.

For example, the sound associated with the crow is connected with the letter Aa, so that the learner begins to understand that written symbols correspond to pronounceable sounds. Therefore, the learner can repeat animal sounds, practice their ability to hear, distinguish, reproduce, and connect sounds with written symbols. In this way, the relation between the student and the sound of alphabetic letters is intended to be improved.

4.2.3.1.3. Into What?

Through the above-mentioned process, the child develops phonemic awareness, the ability to recognise, connect, and reproduce the sounds that written letters represent. By introducing written symbols as representations of spoken sounds, Comenius guides teachers to associate the sounds made by animals with their corresponding letters. This correspondence between phonemes and graphemes provides students with the tools to begin decoding written language, preparing them to read and write.

As students develop their recognition and articulation skills, they learn to identify the smallest units of speech and decode written words by connecting individual sounds to their written forms. As in the example above, a child imitating the crow's caw 'à à' begins to associate the sound with the letter Aa. Once this connection is established, the student can move from recognising the letter in isolation to using it in words such as ant or apple and eventually applying this knowledge to spell and read further words. In this way, Comenius' chapter is perhaps designed to develop children's phonological awareness by grounding abstract written symbols in the natural sounds and phenomena already familiar to them.

As students improve their recognition and articulation skills, they can identify and process the smallest units of speech and then decode written words by recognising the sounds of individual letters. For example, children learning to imitate the crow's caw 'à à' sets the stage for recognising the letter 'Aa' in written words. Subsequently, introducing the letter 'Aa' with an image of a crow and its pronunciation 'à à' allows students to relate the letter to its pronunciation. When students recognise that the sound 'à à' corresponds to the letter 'Aa', they associate the sound with the word and thus begin to understand how the letter functions in a larger word context. For example, once they learn about the letter Aa, they can move from combining the letter Aa into words to related words and contexts like the words 'ant' and 'apple',

and then they can use this knowledge to spell other words. In this way, Comenius designed a program to develop children's phonological awareness by relating the sounds of the alphabet to natural phenomena and animal sounds, thereby enabling them to speak correctly.

4.2.3.1.4. How is this Relation Improved?

Comenius designed a three-step sequence of picture-sound and letter, moving from the concrete to the abstract. Each line of the alphabet list presents, first, an image of an animal, then a bilingual description of the sound it makes, and finally the corresponding letter in both upper and lower case, hinting at Comenius' approach that learning must proceed from the known to the unknown, from sensory experience to abstract comprehension.

In practice, when using *Orbis Pictus* as a teaching text, the teacher might proceed as follows. First, students are shown familiar images of animals or birds, building a foundation of visual recognition and establishing concrete mental associations. Then the teacher vocalises the animals' sounds with clear articulation and invites students to imitate them, since younger students may not recognise the written description. Finally, the teacher introduces the corresponding letter, writes it on the board, explains its connection to the animal's sound, and guides students to copy and trace it. Since beginners cannot yet read independently, the written bilingual description serves primarily as a guide for the teacher rather than for the learner, a reminder that *Orbis Pictus* was designed as both a teaching and a learning tool. The teacher is thus a bridge between written text and the child's understanding, translating the printed description into spoken sound and lived experience. For instance, in the row of the crow and the letter 'Aa', the teacher may first direct the child's attention to the pictured bird, then vocalise the crow's call, invite imitation, and finally introduce the written letter as the symbolic form corresponding to that sound.

This integrated approach of seeing, hearing, speaking and writing together shows a movement from sensory engagement to abstract understanding, which is particularly suitable for beginners who are not yet able to read and write independently but who may already have some familiarity with spoken sounds and animal sounds. For Comenius (1887, p. xvi), this alphabet 'affords a device for learning to read more than ever before', particularly when accompanied by a set of symbolic characters—that is, each letter's symbol, accompanied by an image of the creature it was intended to represent. In this way, young pupils need only gaze upon these creatures to easily memorise the meaning and pronunciation of each character.

When they open *Orbis Pictus*, they have a picture-represented real world in front of their eyes, which makes learning the book more enjoyable and fun to a certain extent. Comenius explained why he organised this book in this particular way in the preface of *Orbis Pictus* (Comenius, 1887). Firstly, as Comenius (1887) proposed, children from a very young age liked drawing pictures, reading picture books, and talking about pictures. With this book, children are fascinated by the pictures, which represent the real world and capture students' attention, helping them enjoy studying. Secondly, Comenius (1887) thinks the pictures in this alphabetic chapter connect children with the real things and the knowledge, which evokes the student's attention to the thing itself and allows for a more subtle focus. Because human beings' senses, especially young people's, are always drawn to real things, they cannot actually perceive the real meaning without seeing concrete things. But if they can see the real objects, their interest will increase, and they will want to keep their attention. So, this book engages the senses and trains youngsters' minds in preparation for more complex learning in the future.

4.2.3.1.5. Why does this relation need to be improved?

In seventeenth-century Europe, few people could read and write accurately, so reading skills were considered a top educational priority. Literacy was not only the basis for academic development but was considered a key pathway to religious salvation and social participation. During Comenius' time, the Protestant promotion of Bible study also led to the religiosity of education, with reading skills seen as a bridge to divine knowledge (Sadler, 2013). Accordingly, recognising and understanding the written word was an essential foundation for approaching divine revelation, and learning to read and learn the alphabet was the first step in understanding God's language and wisdom. To access the language of religious texts, a first step could be studying the language's most basic unit through alphabetic instruction and a foundation in phonics. Comenius, in fact, also set out teaching letters and sounds as the first step in the language-teaching process in *Orbis Pictus* (Comenius, 1659).

When Comenius promoted the use of his own textbooks to educate pupils, the inadequate teaching standards displayed by some educators led Comenius to believe that schools neglected to provide scholars with what was to be learned without understanding it or presenting it correctly to the senses (Comenius, 1887). As a result, teaching and learning proceeded laboriously with little success (Sadler, 2013). Perhaps to compensate for this shortcoming and to suggest an effective approach, he combined pictures, sounds, and letters in the alphabet chapter of *Orbis Pictus*, providing a means to combine sensory experience with abstract learning. Comenius' idea of teaching was well described in the preface to *Orbis Pictus*. He emphasised the importance of straightforward, unambiguous, and logical teaching and learning above complicated, difficult-to-understand, or confusing material. In this method, the

world's phenomena may be presented to pupils in an authentic form, allowing them to accept and understand them.

In summary, the first improvable relation in *Orbis Pictus* concerns the learner's relation to the sounds of alphabetic language. Comenius designed the alphabet list to introduce students to the sounds of the letters of the new language, achieved through integrated pairing of seeing, hearing, speaking, and writing, so that students learn to read and write letters. The educators connect children's familiar real-world experiences with unfamiliar written symbols. The world as a whole thus becomes a perceivable domain represented by language; the sound of the language represents the first step toward their ability to connect with the real world, followed by the emergence of words (Relation 2, further elaborated in Section 4.2.3.2) and discourse (Relation 3, further elaborated in Section 4.2.3.3). In this way, whilst teaching basic linguistic functions (pronunciation), this design embodies one of the intentions of this tradition: educators intend to improve students' relation with their understanding and memorisation of the sounds of the letters (Relation 1). After reaching to a preliminary understanding of the educator's intention in improving students' relation with the sound of the letter, this discussion moves on to the next part of this book and explore how *Orbis Pictus* sought to educate the next generation between the student and words.

4.2.3.2. From Scenes to Vocabulary: Identifying and Naming Objects in The World

In the previous section, this thesis attempted to unpack Comenius' reasons and methods for teaching the alphabet to pupils who are just beginning to learn to read and write in the opening chapter of *Orbis Pictus*, i.e., from the noise of the creatures

of the world to the letters of the basic unit of language. Now, building on this basic phonological understanding, the discussion now explores a more complex pedagogical relation: from recognising sounds to naming objects in the world. This relation builds on the basic phonological awareness established in Relation 1 and extends learning to vocabulary acquisition and object recognition.

In the previous section, it can be assumed that the chapter on the alphabet is intended for students who are new to the certain aspects of language in the book, e.g., some students cannot read at all, so the pictures in it are the simplest and most intuitive, and the language annotations are most likely written to be read by the teacher and then paraphrased to the students, thus making it less difficult for them to learn. In this part of the study of named objects, this section chooses chapters such as 'Flowers', 'Potherbs', 'Corn', and 'Deformed and Monstrous People' which represent the chapters following the alphabet, to provide an illustration of Comenius' pedagogical ideas, with the premise that these chapters are somewhat more difficult to read than the alphabet that are intended for students who have already mastered basic reading skills. It also reflects Comenius' approach to organising the chapters of *Orbis Pictus* so that each corresponds to a stage in the learner's progression, guiding them from the most basic sensory engagement to complex intellectual comprehension. Now let's have a look at the chapters of 'Flowers', 'Potherbs', 'Corn' and 'Deformed and Monstrous People' as examples of this approach.

4.2.3.2.1. Description of the Sample Chapters



Flowers. XV. Flores

Amongst the Flowers the most noted,
In the beginning of the Spring are the *Violet*, 1. the *Crow-toes*, 2. the *Daffodil*, 3.
Then the *Lillies*, 4. white and yellow and blew, 5. and the *Rose*, 6. and the *Clove-gilliflowers*, 7. &c.
Of these *Garlands*, 8. and *Nosegays*, 9. are tyed round with twigs.
There are added also *sweet herbs*, 10. as *Marjoram*, *Flower gentle*, *Rue*, *Lavender*, *Rosemary*.

Inter flores notissimi,
Primo vere,
Viola, 1. *Hyacinthus*, 2. *Narcissus*, 3.
Tum *Lilia*, 4. alba & lutea, & cœrulea, 5. tandem *Rosa*, 6. & *Caryophillum*, 7. &c.
Ex his *Serta*, 8. & *Servia*, 9. vientur.
Adduntur etiam *Herbæ odoratæ*, 10. ut *Amaracus*, *Amaranthus*, *Ruta*, *Lavendula*, *Rosmarinus*, (Libanotis)

Hysop, *Spike*, *Basil*, *Sage*, *Mints*, &c.
Amongst Field-flowers, 11. the most noted are the *May-lillie*, *Germander*, the *Blew-Bottle*, *Chamomel*, &c.
And amongst Herbs, *Trefoil*. *Wormwood*, *Sorrel*, the *Nettle*, &c.
The *Tulip*, 12. is the grace of flowers, but affording no smell.

Hyssopus, *Nard*, *Ocymum*, *Salvia*, *Menta*, &c.
Inter Campestres Flores, 11. notissimi sunt *Lilium Convallium*, *Chamædrys*, *Cyanus*, *Chamæmelum*, &c.
Et Herbæ, *Cytisus* (Trifolium) *Absinthium*, *Acetosa*, *Urtica*, &c.
Tulipa, 12. est decus Florum, sed expers odoris.

Figure 18: Chapter 15 (Flowers) from Orbis Pictus (Comenius, 1887). Public domain.

This chapter depicts a vase adorned with various types and sizes of flowers, including lilies and roses. The picture (see Figure 18) provides a clear, detailed image of flowers, engaging students' senses of shape, colour, and form. Students are introduced to specific names, such as Violet, Lily, Rose, etc. The systematic use of numbers aligns each visual object with its labelled word. Through the picture and numbered notes, students practice recognising and naming flowers and herbs.

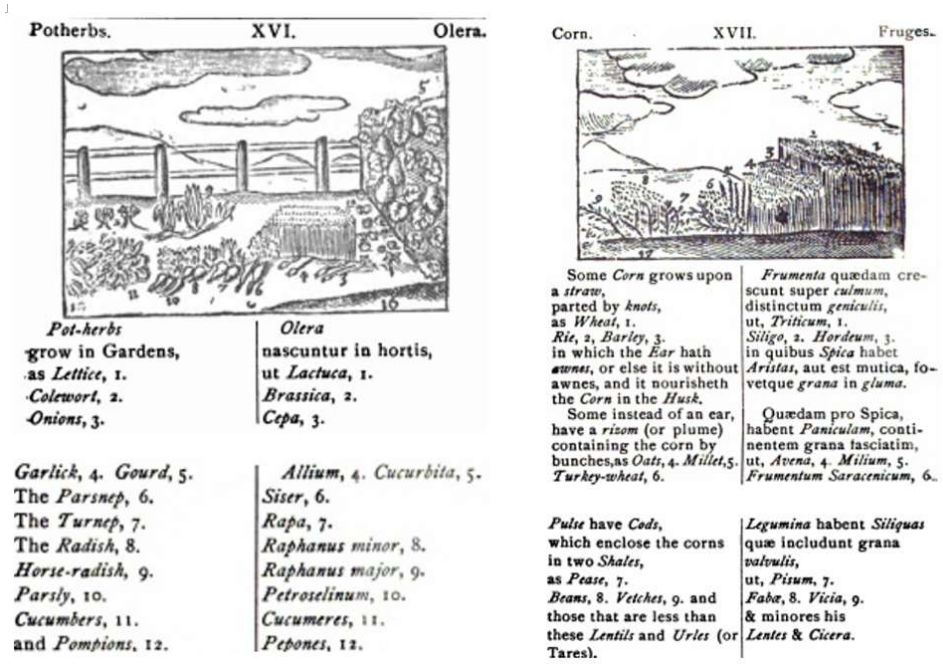
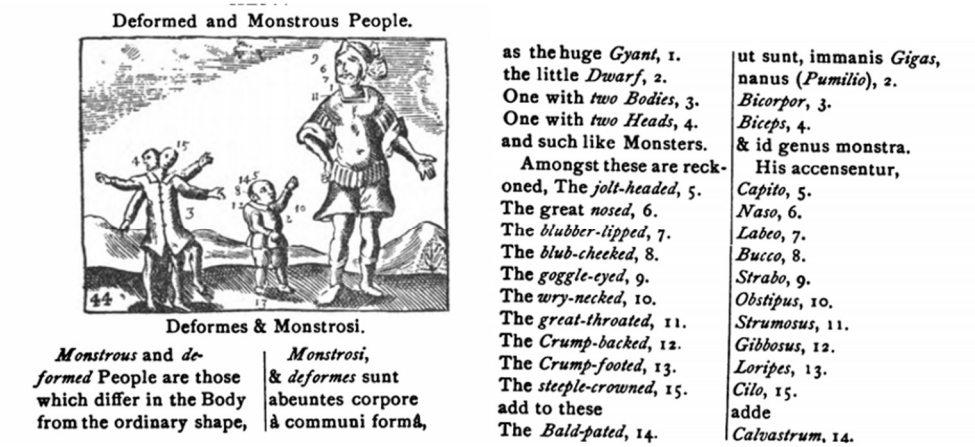


Figure 19: Chater 16 (Potherbs) and Chater 17 (Corn) from Orbis Pictus (Comenius, 1887). Public domain.

This chapter shows the students a garden with rows of plants (herbs and vegetables). Students are introduced to edible plants, connecting language learning with practical knowledge *(*see Figure 19*)*. The act of naming edible plants teaches categorisation based on utility. The illustration of a garden filled with potherbs (e.g., Lettuce, Onions, Radish) immerses students in a familiar, organised scene. Plants are named systematically, from Lettuce to Gourds and Cucumbers. These are objects students might encounter in their daily lives. Naming potherbs allows students to link the visual image of the plants to their edible and practical use. In this way, students grasp the real meaning of herbs and vegetables.

The picture on the right in this section shows a large field planted with various crops. Through the description and the image in this picture, students learn the names of crops such as wheat and peas *(*see Figure 1*9)*. By naming grains and legumes, students connect the objects to their functions and cultural importance (e.g., Bread comes from Wheat). In this way, students grasp the real meaning of crops. Then, Comenius

not only taught the pupils about plants, but also about the different forms of the human body.



Deformed and Monstrous People.

Deformes & Monstrosi.

Monstrous and *deformed* People are those which differ in the Body from the ordinary shape, as the huge *Gyant*, 1. the little *Dwarf*, 2. One with *two Bodies*, 3. One with *two Heads*, 4. and such like Monsters. Amongst these are reckoned, The *jolt-headed*, 5. The great *nosed*, 6. The *blubber-lipped*, 7. The *blub-cheeked*, 8. The *goggle-eyed*, 9. The *wry-necked*, 10. The *great-throated*, 11. The *Crump-backed*, 12. The *Crump-footed*, 13. The *steeple-crowned*, 15. add to these The *Bald-pated*, 14.

Monstrosi, & *deformes* sunt abeuntes corpore à communi formâ, ut sunt, immanis *Gigas*, nanus (*Pumilio*), 2. *Bicorpor*, 3. *Biceps*, 4. & id genus monstra. His accensentur, *Capito*, 5. *Naso*, 6. *Labeo*, 7. *Bucco*, 8. *Strabo*, 9. *Obstipus*, 10. *Strumosus*, 11. *Gibbosus*, 12. *Loripes*, 13. *Cilo*, 15. adde *Calvastrum*, 14.

Figure 20: Chapter 44 (Deformed and Monstrous People), from Orbis Pictus (Comenius, 1887). Public domain.

In the chapter 'Deformed and Monstrous People', Comenius described a scene that reflects an early modern understanding of physical deformities and anomalies, and how society classified and viewed individuals who exhibited these traits *(*see Figure 20*)*. The use of words such as 'monstrous' reflects people's bias against different forms of the human body during that historical period, which also explains why those bodily forms were frequently seen as strange, frightening, or even unnatural. Comenius' method of categorisation helped to educate students about the diversity of the body, but also emphasised that deformities were often viewed negatively, reinforcing the idea that such differences deviated from a 'common form'. Comenius may have been trying to show his students that strange things do happen in the real world, but his terminology (especially in textbooks that teach language) shows a strong prejudice. In other words, according to the text in this chapter, it can be inferred that Comenius claims normal bodies that are created by God are called 'normal', while abnormal bodies are called deformed' and strange (this idea is also consistent with what was discussed in Section 4.2.3.2.5 regarding Plato's essentialism).

At the same time, through this section, Comenius is likely also showing that human difference is universal and that observing and studying it is necessary.

4.2.3.2.2. What Relation is Intended to be Improved?

After studying the chapter on Alphabet, students recognise basic letters and sounds and learn to read at a basic level. Comenius then prepares them for the aforementioned chapters that increase the difficulty and text complexity of the sections, such as 'Flowers', 'Potherbs', 'Corn', and Deformed and Monstrous People'. From the analysis of these chapters, it can be seen that the italic nouns linked with numbered notes are the focus of learning. Students strengthen their vocabulary acquisition and understanding of object concepts in a bilingual context by learning to name the same objects in different languages, thereby expanding their vocabulary and contextual knowledge.

The chapters of Flowers, Potherb, Corn and Deformed and Monstrous People can exemplify Comenius's efforts to help students develop vocabulary and identification skills through systematic naming. Comenius uses a combination of pictures, numbered notes, and bilingual descriptions to guide learners in progressively associating words with real-world objects, and students learn to identify and name objects for aesthetic appreciation. Comenius reinforces students' vocabulary mastery and understanding of object concepts by guiding them through a gradual process of naming in these chapters. This relationship focuses on developing students' communication skills in visual perception and verbal recognition. It aims to improve the relation between students and the linguistic representations of the world, specifically enabling them to name, categorise, and describe objects encountered in everyday life.

During the study, students begin with what they see (pictures) and progressively deepen their understanding through naming. Naming captures an object's

characteristics, qualities, and functions and can focus attention on these essential attributes. For example, flowers embody beauty and grace; potherb represents nutrition and utility; corn symbolises food and agricultural labour; Deformed and Monstrous People symbolise the various human ecosystems that exist. In this way, students not only enhance their vocabulary and their naming and identification capacities but also improve their understanding of objects in the world. In this way, the relation between the students and the lexical naming of the world in the new language is intended to be improved.

4.2.3.2.3. Into What?

This section analyses the chapters titled 'Flowers,' 'Plants,' 'Corn,' and 'Deformed and Monstrous People' with the goal of examining Comenius' suggestion in his book to teach pupils to use the language they are learning to name and label the visible and invisible things in the world. Subsequently, students can expand their vocabulary by improving their ability to identify visible and tactile items.

By learning to name, students develop their capacity to notice and identify objects in the real world. The names help students distinguish one object from another and understand its characteristics. Through naming, students learn to connect a name to an object when they don't yet know the object's name. Furthermore, once the students have established an initial understand the name and its meaning, this naming process helps them lay the groundwork for more advanced language abilities, such as reading and writing. In this way, the relation between the students and the lexical naming of the world in the new language is improved.

4.2.3.2.4. How is this Relation Improved?

In the preface of the book, according to Comenius, individuals perceive the world through their senses; therefore, the ground of education should start from their

awareness of their senses (Comenius, 1887). To ensure a smooth and meaningful education, as a distinct feature, Comenius devised images and nomenclature for daily activities and basic things in the world to stimulate and awaken students' senses in all directions for educational purposes. According to Comenius, the images in the book represented all the visible things in the world, while invisible things can be seen in a particular way (Comenius, 1887). All these things (visible or invisible) have been named with nomenclatures as the title and the whole meaning of the thing. Learners first see a detailed illustration of familiar, tangible objects or activities. The key learning words are italic and numbered in numerical order, giving the layout a more organised appearance. Students use bilingual descriptions (Latin and vernacular) to name each numbered object in the illustration. This method makes the difficult work easier by breaking it down into smaller, more manageable steps. It also helps students find, recognise, and name things in a structured way.

In addition, in the second sample chapter, Comenius describes a type of peculiar individual, which is the 'Deformed and Monstrous People'. This chapter classifies bodily variations as deviations from the 'normal form'. Through this presentation, pupils grasp that while all bodies are human, differences exist, prompting reflection on diverse manifestations of the same essence. This observation of variation thus becomes a starting point for judgment and a prerequisite for rational decision-making. This gives rise to a key factor necessitating wise action; that is, the accuracy of the observation and the presentation of the things. In *Orbis Pictus*, Comenius utilises a combination of pictures, words, and numbers to describe and locate things as accurately as possible.

Consequently, in *Orbis Pictus*, Comenius presents a pedagogical method that teaches students to read and write names and to understand the essence of the objects they encounter in the world (the idea of essence will be discussed in the Section 4.2.3.2.5). By connecting visual representations and their linguistic labels with numbered notes,

Comenius facilitates a process that moves students beyond mere recognition to an understanding of the world's objects and their qualities. For example, in the chapter on Potherbs, the pictures of the garden are organised into rows of plants, each with a number. The numbered labels correspond directly to the text, where students can find the English and Latin names of the plants. The entire book follows this method, in which numbers and descriptions correspond to each other to explain the names.

Orbis Pictus places pictures that represent sensory engagement at the core of each chapter, and the fact that children learn new things from pictures is consistent with the intellectual sequence in which children learn about the world through exposure to concrete things and their names, which represent their essence. As explained earlier, the pictures and descriptions are closely linked, with each thing in the picture and its corresponding term in the textual description being labelled with the same numbered notes to indicate their equivalence. Students follow a sequential process, which makes naming systematic and easy to grasp. For example, the named objects are drawn from students' everyday experiences, such as flowers, Potherbs, and Corn, with numbered notes linking pictures of the real objects to descriptive text that explains their essence. Students relate their learning to familiar contexts. In this way, this practical exercise helps students learn to distinguish between objects, such as flowers and edible plants, and to understand their roles in the world.

Here is a teaching demonstration based on this structure to see how this method can be brought to life when a teacher uses *Orbis Pictus* as a teaching textbook. Teachers can show children the items by pointing them out in the image, saying their names clearly, and then having the students read and write them down repeatedly. This way, the teacher may help students progress from recognising things to naming them using the images. Teachers use this practice to help pupils figure out what the images show in real life, such as flowers in a garden. Before naming an object, students should state its colour, size, or purpose. In another situation, the teacher takes students on a walk

and asks them to observe and name objects in their surroundings, such as Potherbs, Flowers, or Crops. Pupils compare actual observations with illustrations from *Orbis Pictus*, thus linking theoretical knowledge with practical experience.

4.2.3.2.5. Why does this Relation Need to be Improved?

In the preface to this book, Comenius introduced readers to his general idea of how he had designed and organised it. Comenius emphasised his viewpoints. Comenius claims that children should be educated with true knowledge, and that this process should be accomplished in educational settings in a 'true', 'full', 'clear' and 'solid' way (Comenius, 1887, p. 5). According to Comenius, the content educators teach must first be true and beneficial to students' lives, so as to avoid students complaining that they haven't learned the necessary knowledge. It has to fully improve students' knowledge base, their ability to use the language to talk and debate, and their ability to live their lives (Comenius, 1887).

Comenius further suggested that children should be taught concrete things (Comenius, 1887). Let the children play with these things, observe them closely, and feel them fully. This should be done at home as soon as possible. When children enter school, they learn about these things, like what they are and what they are called (Comenius, 1887). In light of this, children may quickly link what they are educated with to what they already know. In addition, Comenius insisted that students should be allowed to see things in their true form so they can truly understand them, such as their colour and taste (Comenius, 1887). Last but not least, educators should provide a place where students can fully exercise all their senses to gain true knowledge about the world.

This understanding of the names of things and the knowledge of those things was crucial to people's participation in social and economic life in seventeenth-century Europe, especially since the Reformation, with its emphasis on personal engagement

with scripture, also demanded that people first acquire vocabulary and reading skills. Central to this vision is the idea, assumed here, that Comenius' interest in teaching reading and writing names of objects in the world to students is intrinsically linked to the idea that students learn 'true', 'full', 'clear' and 'solid' knowledge and thus ultimately understanding and knowing the real knowledge of the world, which in a way can be called an end in itself. The premise is that he believes that understanding begins with the accurate naming of things, because naming is not just a linguistic exercise but a means of understanding the nature (or the essence) of things.

Comenius quotes an extract from *Genesis* on the second page of *Orbis Pictus* (sandwiched between the Cover of the first page and the Author's Preface on the third page), which is presumably the origin of this educational design of Comenius' book *Orbis Pictus*. The quoted section below shows the same bilingual setting of English and Latin description:

> The Lord God brought unto Adam every Beast of the Field, and every Fowl of the Air, to see what he would call them. And Adam gave Names to all Cattle, and to the Fowl of the Air, and to every Beast of the Field (Genesis 2:19–20).
>
> Adduxit Dominus Deus ad Adam cuncta Animantia Terrae, & universa volatilia Caeli, ut videret quomodo vocaret illa. Appellavitque Adam Nominibus suis cuncta Animantia, & universa volatilia Caeli, & omnes Bestias Agri (Genesis 2:19–20).

This passage describes the moment in the Bible when God presents all creatures to Adam and gives him the task of naming them. This act of naming symbolises human dominion over and understanding of creation. From a theological perspective, naming is seen as a way of understanding and categorising the world God created, reflecting both responsibility and knowledge. The pictures in *the Orbis Picture* serve as a starting

point for understanding, just as Adam observed the animals by sight before naming them. The way of labelling connects the senses (pictures) to the intellect (understanding names and meanings). With this, Comenius used pictures and labels to teach students the names and meanings of objects in *Orbis Pictus*, seemingly mimicking Adam's process of naming animals. Naming is not just about labelling, but about understanding the nature and function of creation. Just as Adam named the animals in order to exercise dominion and understand their roles, the students in *Orbis Pictus* learn names in order to grasp the nature and purpose of everything in the world.

The understanding of naming implied in *Comenius' Orbis Pictus* is consistent with the philosophical tradition from Plato. In Plato's Cratylus, Socrates engages in a dialogue with Hermogenes and Cratylus about naming and the rightness of naming (Sedley, 2003). Cratylus argued that every name has its natural justification, which is not arbitrarily determined by human beings, but is naturally linked to the object to which the name refers. Hermogenes, on the other hand, argues that names are merely symbols of consensus among people, and that their meaning is determined solely by consensus (Sedley, 2003). So they consult Socrates, who then leads Hermogenes step by step through the dialogue to his answer. In the dialogue, Socrates says, 'Yes, for as his name, so also is his nature… the name is perfectly correct in every point of view ', and later he pointed out that 'I believe that the primeval givers of names were undoubtedly like too many of our modern philosophers, who, in their search after the nature of things…', and further Socrates says, 'They are the men to whom I should attribute the imposition of names. Even in foreign names, if you analyse them, a meaning is still discernible.' Especially on the topic of essence, Socrates claims that,

> …and things are not relative to individuals, and all things do not equally belong to all at the same moment and always, they must be supposed to have their own proper and permanent essence: they

> are not in relation to us, or influenced by us, fluctuating according to our fancy, but they are independent, and maintain to their own essence the relation prescribed by nature. (Plato, translated by B. Jowett. 1892, 386d–e)

In this dialogue, Socrates equates naming to building a tool in this conversation, just as a carpenter produces a shuttle for weaving. Plato argues that names must reflect the nature of the objects they denote. This is mirrored in Comenius' organisation of chapters such as 'Flowers', 'Potherbs', and 'Corn', where the names are tied directly to illustrations and descriptions, grounding abstract linguistic symbols in tangible reality. In Comenius's case, the numbered notes in *Orbis Pictus* serve as the 'instrument' that connects names to the visual and sensory essence of objects, aiding children in grasping true knowledge. Further, Socrates directed Hermogenes to the idea that names are not arbitrary but have a natural correctness tied to the essence of the things they represent[23].

This aligns with Comenius' idea that knowing the name of an object gives insight into its essence. Both believe that naming is not merely labelling but a tool for understanding the world. Comenius incorporated this tradition into his *Orbis Pictus*, which helps children understand by using a systematic naming system. For example, with numbered pictures and textual descriptions, children learn new words and connect them to real things, their properties, and their place in the real world. This method of education helps students connect their experiences (seeing pictures and hearing sounds) to learning to read names and understand their meanings (the essence to which the names correspond).

[23] The present analysis does not claim a direct dependence on Plato; rather, it uses this as a reference and attempts to clarify the pedagogical significance of naming in *Orbis Pictus*.

In short, by introducing students to these words and the meanings they represent, teachers guide them in reading and writing the basic vocabulary for identifying and naming objects. For example, the chapters on ‘Flowers’, ‘Potherbs’, and ‘Corn’ highlight how naming allows students to identify, distinguish, and grasp the essence of these plants. This pedagogical approach reflects Comenius’ belief that education should start with real, solid things and gradually help students realise their true meaning. In this way, linking pictures and descriptions with numbered notes helps to focus children’s attention and reduces distractions. Textual descriptions, the use of generic terms for names, and the simplicity of sentence structure reduce the burden on children’s memory in the early stages of language learning and avoid aversion to difficulty. With this approach, educators improve students’ relation with reading and writing, and their understanding of the lexical naming of objects in the world. In the next chapter, this thesis discusses the third relation that educators intend to improve for students.

4.2.3.3. From Words to Discourse: Communicating Ideas and Narratives

After analysing the chapters where students learn pronunciation and phonological initiation, as well as vocabulary and naming, the next question is, which relation does Comenius turn to next? Following the pattern of the order in which the model chapters were chosen, which shows a deliberate progress, the subsequent content develops and becomes more complex or abstract. As the selection of sample chapters continues, it emerges that Comenius begins to discuss topics such as philosophy, human life, and human relationships. From this, it can be inferred that this relation moves beyond pronouncing and naming, focusing on how students progress from making the sound and understanding words to advanced language skills, which this chapter explores. First, the discussion turns to the sample chapters that have been selected.

4.2.3.3.1. Description of the Sample Chapters

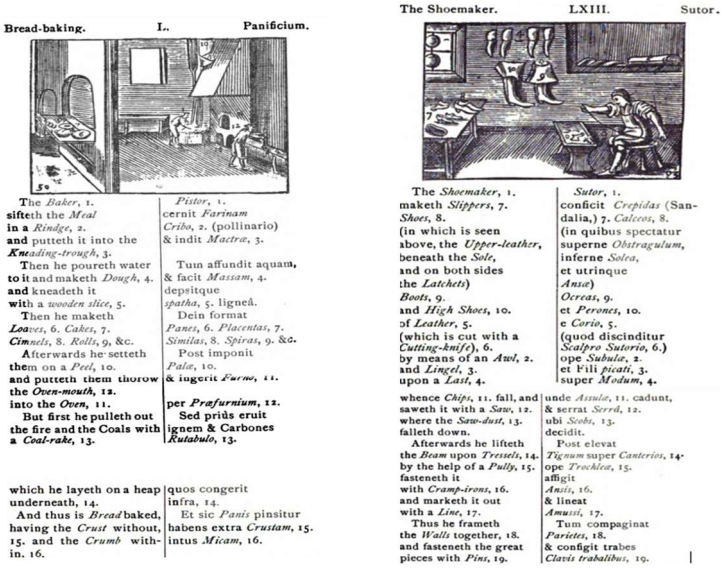


Figure 21: Chapters 50 (Bread-baking) and 63 (The Shoemaker) of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (1887). Public domain.

In Chapters 45-71, 81-84, 127-130, Comenius first introduces the process of how to bake a bread in the Chapter 'Bread-baking' on the left above and then introduces the procedure of making different types of shoes on the right above in the Chapter 'The Shoemaker' (see Figure 21). In the 'Bread-Baking' chapter, the baker appears busy at the bakery, sifting flour and kneading dough. Tools such as kneading troughs, coal rakes and peelers are also shown to highlight their role in baking. The final bread should be crispy on the outside but fluffy on the inside, according to the text under the picture. While in the Chapter of 'The Shoemaker', various types of shoes such as slippers, leather shoes and boots hang on the roof of the workshop, the man is hard at work making shoes with tools such as awls and knives to cut the leather and then sew them together. In general, the two chapters are designed to provide detailed illustrative vocabulary, as well as descriptions and narratives associated with bread-baking and shoemaking.

After examining the two activities in human's daily life described by Comenius, the focus now shifts to several relationships among people mentioned in *Orbis Pictus*.



CXVIII.
Society betwixt Man and Wife.

Societas Conjugalis.

Marriage was appointed by God in Paradise, for mutual *help*, and the *Propagation* of mankind.
A young man (*a single man*) being to be married, should be furnished either with *Wealth*, or a *Trade* and *Science*,

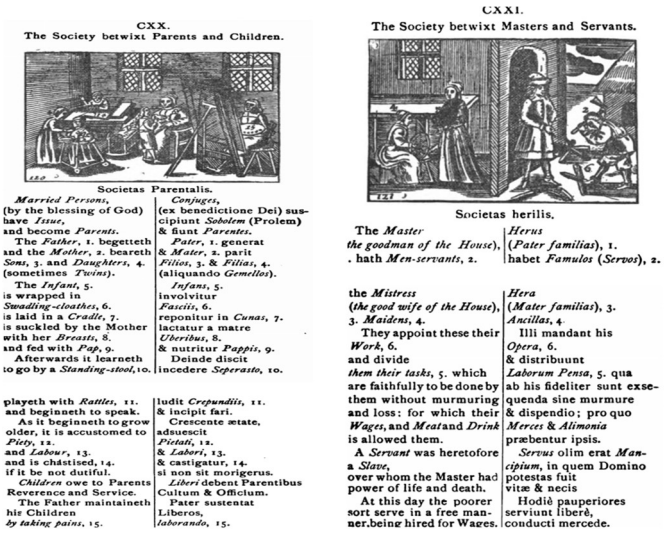
Matrimonium institutum est à Deo in Paradiso, ad mutuum *adjutorium*, & *propagationem* generis humani.
Vir Juvenis (*Cælebs*) conjugium initurus, instructus sit aut *Opibus*, aut *Arte* & *Scientiâ*,

which may serve for getting a living; that he may be able to maintain a *Family*.
Then he chooseth himself a *Maid* that is *Marriageable*, (or a *Widow*) whom he loveth; nevertheless a greater Regard is to be had of *Virtue*, and *Honesty*, than of *Beauty* or *Portion*.
Afterwards, he doth not betroth her to himself closely, but entreateth for her as a *Woer*, first to the *Father*, 1. and then the *Mother*, 2. or the *Guardians*, or *Kinsfolks*, by such *as help to make the match*, 3.
When she is espous'd to him, he becometh the *Bridegroom*, 4. and she the *Bride*, 5. and the *Contract* is made, and an *Instrument* of *Dowry*, 6. is written.
At the last the *Wedding* is made, where they are joined together by the *Priest*, 7. giving their *Hands*, 8. one to another. and *Wedding-rings*, 9. then they feast with the witnesses that are invited.
After this they are called *Husband* and *Wife*; when she is dead he becometh a *Widower*.

quæ sit de pane lucrando; ut possit sustentare *Familiam*.
Deinde eligit sibi *Virginem Nubilem*, (aut *Viduam*) quam adamat; ubi tamen major ratio habenda *Virtutis* & *Honestatis*, quàm *Formæ* aut *Dotis*.
Posthæc, non clam despondet sibi eam, sed ambit, ut *Procus*, apud *Patrem*, 1. & *Matrem*, 2. vel apud *Tutores*, & *Cognatos*, per *Pronubos*, 3.
Eâ sibi desponsâ, fit *Sponsus*, 4. & ipsa *Sponsa*, 5. fiuntque *Sponsalia*, & scribitur *Instrumentum Dotale*, 6.
Tandem fiunt *Nuptiæ* ubi copulantur à *Sacerdote*, 7. datis *Manibus*, 8. ultrò citroque, & *Annulis Nuptialibus*, 9. tum epulantur cum invitatis testibus.
Abhinc dicuntur *Maritus* & *Uxor*; hâc mortuâ ille fit *Viduus*.

Figure 22: Chapter 118 (Society betwixt Man and Wife) of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (1887). Public domain.

This chapter describes Chapter 118 Society between Man and Wife (see Figure 22). The picture shows a church where a conventional Christian wedding ceremony seems to be taking place. A priest or other religious leader is marrying the couple. A group of witnesses stands in the background, observing the wedding. These witnesses might be family members or friends. Comenius introduces the details he imagines for this scenario in the illustrative part following the picture. In general, Comenius first pointed out in this chapter that marriage was first a social relation arranged by God in heaven. He then indicated that to enter this relation, the man needs to possess wealth or the ability to acquire wealth for the family, while the woman doesn't need to be beautiful or rich; she just needs to be virtuous and honest. Further, this relation is enabled and witnessed by the masses rather than just between the man and the woman.



CXX.
The Society betwixt Parents and Children.

Societas Parentalis.

Married Persons, (by the blessing of God) have *Issue,* and become *Parents.*	*Conjuges,* (ex benedictione Dei) suscipiunt *Sobolem* (Prolem) & fiunt *Parentes.*
The *Father,* 1. begetteth and the *Mother,* 2. beareth *Sons,* 3. and *Daughters,* 4. (sometimes *Twins*).	*Pater,* 1. generat & *Mater,* 2. parit *Filios,* 3. & *Filias,* 4. (aliquando *Gemellos*).
The *Infant,* 5. is wrapped in *Swadling-cloathes,* 6. is laid in a *Cradle,* 7. is suckled by the Mother with her *Breasts,* 8. and fed with *Pap,* 9.	*Infans,* 5. involvitur *Fasciis,* 6. reponitur in *Cunas,* 7. lactatur a matre *Uberibus,* 8. & nutritur *Pappis,* 9.
Afterwards it learneth to go by a *Standing-stool,* 10.	Deinde discit incedere *Seperasto,* 10.
playeth with *Rattles,* 11. and begineth to speak.	ludit *Crepundiis,* 11. & incipit fari.
As it begineth to grow older, it is accustomed to *Piety,* 12. and *Labour,* 13. and is chastised, 14. if it be not dutiful.	Crescente ætate, adsuescit *Pietati,* 12. & *Labori,* 13. & castigatur, 14. si non sit morigerus.
Children owe to Parents Reverence and Service.	*Liberi* debent Parentibus Cultum & Officium.
The Father maintaineth his Children *by taking pains,* 15.	Pater sustentat Liberos, *laborando,* 15.

CXXI.
The Society betwixt Masters and Servants.

Societas herilis.

The *Master* (*the goodman of the House*), hath *Men-servants,* 2.	*Herus* (*Pater familias*), 1. habet *Famulos* (*Servos*), 2.
the *Mistress* (*the good wife of the House*), 3. *Maidens,* 4.	*Hera* (*Mater familias*), 3. *Ancillas,* 4.
They appoint these their *Work,* 6. and divide *them their tasks,* 5. which are faithfully to be done by them without murmuring and loss: for which their *Wages,* and *Meat* and *Drink* is allowed them.	Illi mandant his *Opera,* 6. & distribuunt *Laborum Pensa,* 5. qua ab his fideliter sunt exsequenda sine murmure & dispendio; pro quo *Merces & Alimonia* præbentur ipsis.
A *Servant* was heretofore a *Slave,* over whom the Master had power of life and death.	*Servus* olim erat *Mancipium,* in quem Domino potestas fuit vitæ & necis
At this day the poorer sort serve in a free manner, being hired for Wages.	Hodiè pauperiores serviunt liberè, conducti mercede.

Figure 23: Chapters 120 (The Society betwixt Parents and Children) and 121 (The Society betwixt Masters and Servants) of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (1887). Public domain.

After addressing the possibilities of relationship among kinship, Comenius intends to explain the relation of parentage in the next chapter (Chapter 120), 'The Society between Parents and Children' (see Figure 23). In the picture, a woman who looks like the mother is feeding the baby in her arms; another baby is learning to walk with the help of the maid; and a man who looks like the father is drawing on the right side of the room. This shows that children have a duty to honour and serve their parents, and that fathers endeavour to bring up their children. In general, Comenius indicates that in the parent-child relationship, the father supports the family financially, while the mother provides physical care for the child from birth until the child grows up. In addition, Comenius also emphasised the parents' responsibility to care for and raise their children, and that children should respect and honour their parents. In general, this picture shows a family, with each member's role and responsibilities stated.

The next relation Comenius intentionally presents to the reader is the chapter 'The Society between Masters and Servants' (Chapter 121). The picture shows a female servant performing her assigned duties under the hostess's instruction, while outside the house, the master is assigning another servant a job. In general, this chapter has

shown the roles of masters and servants within the household, as well as the social duties and responsibilities of different social classes in Comenius' time.

4.2.3.3.2. What Relation is Intended to be Improved?

As can see from the above sample chapters, Comenius uses language that is more difficult than in the previous chapters. This section describes how learning builds on the early stages of learning, i.e. learning sounds from images (students learn phonological awareness), and learning words from pictures (students learn to name objects and acquire basic vocabulary), and transitions to the ability to articulate thoughts and construct coherent language. The pedagogical relation that Comenius is trying to improve here is the ability of students to learn to use language to express something or an idea coherently and rationally, which means students synthesise their knowledge of language in speech, including combining linguistic elements in order to formulate an opinion, express an idea, or narrate a process or a story. The emphasis is on going beyond specific vocabulary, finding logical and creative connections, developing the capacity to think critically and clearly describe experiences or concepts, and improving speech and expression. This interaction aims to help children move beyond simply naming and describing things to generating ideas and telling stories about those objects. The relation between the students and the skill of making structured, purposeful communication is expected to be improved.

4.2.3.3.3. Into What?

At this point, as pupils' vocabulary grows, they are better able to express themselves in both speech and writing. Students practise thinking in a way that makes sense, which is important for telling a story or summarising what happened. Gradually, students gain the skills to express personal experiences or to create imaginative stories, moving from actual description to intellectual engagement. This means that students have learned to transition from simple word identification and naming to

structured, purposeful communication, which involves organising ideas in a logical and coherent sequence to connect events or processes into sentences and express them in words. In general, at this point, students are expected to practice their expressive language skills, meaning their ability to use language to communicate and tell stories. In other words, the relation between the students and the skill of making structured, purposeful communication is improved.

4.2.3.3.4. How is this Relation Improved?

From the sample chapters, it can be seen that the language and sentence structure used by Comenius, as well as the organisation of the passages, have changed quite a bit: the words are more elevated, the sentence structure is more complex, and the meanings of the passages are more abstract. For example, in the first relation I have suggested Comenius wanted to improve (the pronunciation of letters), the student never recognises the descriptive words and needs the teacher to demonstrate the pronunciation. This evolves into the second relation, where Comenius wants to teach words that are actual creatures that the eye can see, and the syntax is more of a what's this and what's next to it, eventually becoming what is now a much more cumbersome and full-bodied descriptive content in the third paragraph.

As shown in the appendix examples above, each text consists of three parts: the drawing/picture, the text description, and the numbered notes. The title, which is both the picture's name and the text's, is located at the top of each picture and serves to indicate the whole and to form a general concept in children's minds. Pictures that visualise the content of the title are used to attract children's attention and to make connections to real life and the knowledge and experience they already have in mind. Textual descriptions that follow the pictures and detail the different parts are precise, concise, and specific to each item. Each description breaks a complex activity into a step-by-step process, a common teaching method. Learners can visualise each stage

of the task with the corresponding descriptive text. For example, in the sample chapters 'Shoe Making' and 'Baking Bread', the whole process is organised in a clear, logical order, from the initial stage (cutting leather or sifting flour) to the end result (shoemaking or baking bread). Breaking down occupational activities into simple, step-by-step presentations can help learners grasp the sequence more easily.

In the next chapters of Relations (Chapters 118-121), Comenius employs stories about family and social relationships (e.g., marriage, parent-child, master-servant) to exemplify how to replicate a speech or narrate a dialogue. All of these chapters are useful in everyday life because they describe real-life social activities and relationships. In this projective interaction, the pictures add to the words, and the text clarifies the pictures' meaning. Text and pictures work together to create conceptual meanings that can be effectively communicated. Illustrations clarify and help students understand the implications of the words in the text. The text lists numbers next to each vocabulary word, and the pictures show the corresponding numbers. This helps children comprehend what the words imply. In summary, *Orbis Pictus* is a mix of words and pictures. The pictures show what the words say, and the words show what the pictures show. This not only makes children more interested, but it also makes learning and understanding easier. In this approach, pupils progressively learn to link previously acquired vocabulary into coherent, logical sentences and ultimately entire passages and dialogues.

4.2.3.3.5. Why does this Relation Need to be Improved?

As discussed earlier in the first relation, students improve their relation to their understanding of pronunciation. In the second relation, this book can be used to improve students' relation to their vocabulary. In the third relation, students learn to improve their speaking skills by using acquired vocabulary to form sentences and short passages within specific contexts, enabling them to describe and narrate events

for communication purposes. Simply put, it involves preparing written and spoken expressions by placing vocabulary within appropriate settings. This constitutes an advancement in linguistic competence and represents one of the higher-order objectives of language learning: communication and interaction. This is because employing acquired language for purposes such as praying in church, reciting poetry, posing questions to teachers and responding in class, purchasing goods at market stalls, or enquiring about usage instructions, embodies one of language's most vital functions in daily life. Simultaneously, learning and understanding words within sentence structures and texts embodies the hermeneutic approach of moving from the particular to the universal and back again.

In summary, through the study of discourse presented in the text, learners are introduced to the meaningful structures behind actions and social life. In this way, Relation 3 shows that *Orbis Pictus* introduces young learners to the world as something that can be described, narrated, and communicated. The world represented by the book is therefore not only visible and nameable, as shown in Relations 1 and 2, but also a world in which processes, actions, and social relations can be described.

As pupils' learning progresses, the linguistic expression they are able to understand becomes increasingly complex, and their grasp of the language becomes more integrated. At this stage, teaching can gradually move from isolated vocabulary to coherent texts. The content of these coherent texts is not random; rather, it is closely linked to specific objects, activities, and social relationships, and is intimately connected to the educator's pedagogical choices and intentions. In *Orbis Pictus*, Comenius depicts several important aspects of social life at the time; for example, the sample chapters in this section cover marriage, parent-child relationships, and master-servant relationships. In other words, the discourse presented in this section serves both as linguistic material and as a reflection of social life. Consequently, as

students learn to use language to describe these social relationships, they are also exposed to specific understandings of the nature of these relationships and how their participants ought to interact with one another. From this perspective, what is learnt through the teaching of discourse (Relation 3) also conveys meanings about social roles, appropriate behaviour, and forms of interpersonal relationships; language learning and the learning of social and moral knowledge are thus intertwined.

This connection is consistent with Comenius's explicit educational principles. In his preface to *Orbis Pictus*, Comenius points out that 'because we can neither act nor speak wisely, unless we first rightly understand all the things which are to be done, and whereof we are to speak' (Comenius, 1887, p. xiii). That is to say, right speech and right action are both educational outcomes, grounded in a right understanding. In this sense, language learning is not regarded as an isolated, formal exercise but is closely linked to the learner's understanding of the things, actions and relationships that the language represents. Mollenhauer's discussion of educational representation is particularly relevant here, as it highlights precisely the educational significance of choice: what to select from the wider world, how to organise this content, and how to enable children to understand it (Mollenhauer, 2014, p. 10). The world represented in *Orbis Pictus* is therefore not a collection of isolated linguistic forms or unrelated facts, but rather a world in which things, actions, relationships and ways of acting are interpreted as components of a larger order of meaning. The social and moral significance embedded in these chapters may reflect not only specific pedagogical intentions, but also Comenius's broader intellectual and theological framework for understanding knowledge and the world.

Therefore, although Relation 3 in this section analytically focuses on the relation between the learner and discourse, particularly the learners' ability to construct longer or more complex expressions, it can be seen that these sample chapters do not function only as linguistic material, but at the same time link to the discussion of

the learner's relation to action and conduct (Relation 4) through the conveyance of social and moral meanings. Consequently, the analysis of discourse also brings questions of action and conduct into view. In this sense, the transition from Relation 3 to Relation 4 should not be understood as a sudden shift from language teaching to moral education. Rather, as the linguistic material becomes more complex, the selected content already includes more complex human activities and social relationships. Next, this thesis moves to the examination of Relation 4, which therefore develops this aspect further by focusing specifically on the learner's relation to action.

4.2.3.4. From Right Knowing to Right Doing: Forming Judgement through Senses, Reason, and Virtue

In the previous three chapters, this thesis has discussed three relations that Comenius seeks to improve in his students, including phonetics and pronunciation, vocabulary and naming, and narrative, speech, and other integrated language skills that build on the previous two. After this thesis has analysed the knowledge students have mastered and understood, Comenius would have wanted to introduce students to much more advanced knowledge. The improvable relation is no longer merely one between the learner and linguistic symbols or the objects those symbols represent, but rather one between the learner and the reasoning process itself. To analyse this, this thesis has selected the following chapters of the book *Orbis Pictus* for analysis, in an attempt to explore a fourth relation that Comenius intended to improve in students. The discussion now turns to what these chapters are about.

4.2.3.4.1. Description of the Sample Chapters

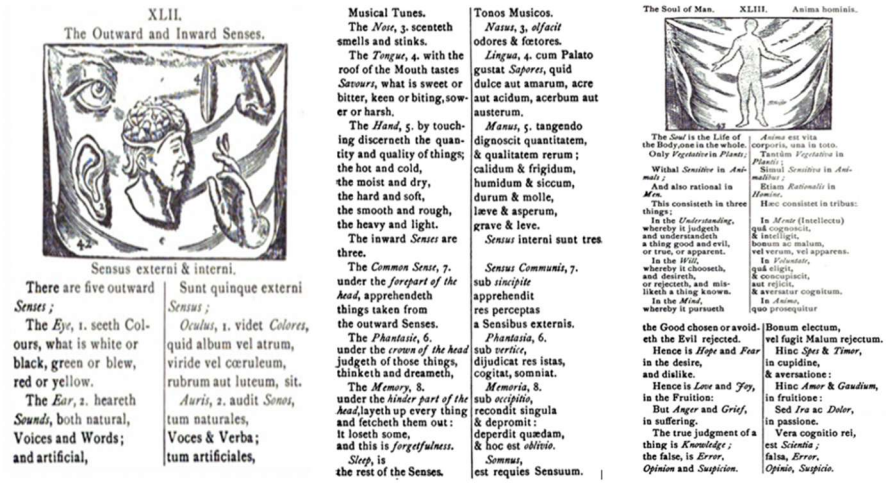
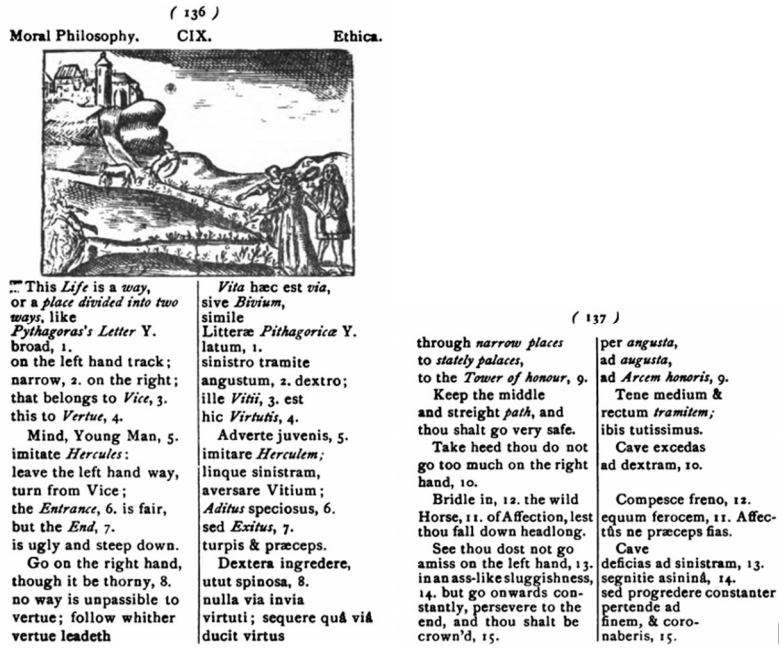

XLII.
The Outward and Inward Senses.
Sensus externi & interni.
There are five outward Senses;
The Eye, 1. seeth Colours, what is white or black, green or blew, red or yellow.
The Ear, 2. heareth Sounds, both natural, Voices and Words; and artificial,
Sunt quinque externi Sensus;
Oculus, 1. videt Colores, quid album vel atrum, viride vel cœruleum, rubrum aut luteum, sit.
Auris, 2. audit Sonos, tum naturales, Voces & Verba; tum artificiales,
Musical Tunes.
The Nose, 3. sceneteth smells and stinks.
The Tongue, 4. with the roof of the Mouth tastes Savours, what is sweet or bitter, keen or biting, sower or harsh.
The Hand, 5. by touching discerneth the quantity and quality of things; the hot and cold, the moist and dry, the hard and soft, the smooth and rough, the heavy and light.
The inward Senses are three.
The Common Sense, 7. under the forepart of the head, apprehendeth things taken from the outward Senses.
The Phantasie, 6. under the crown of the head judgeth of those things, thinketh and dreameth,
The Memory, 8. under the hinder part of the head, layeth up every thing and fetcheth them out: It loseth some, and this is forgetfulness.
Sleep, is the rest of the Senses.
Tonos Musicos.
Nasus, 3, olfacit odores & fœtores.
Lingua, 4. cum Palato gustat Sapores, quid dulce aut amarum, acre aut acidum, acerbum aut austerum.
Manus, 5. tangendo dignoscit quantitatem, & qualitatem rerum; calidum & frigidum, humidum & siccum, durum & molle, læve & asperum, grave & leve.
Sensus interni sunt tres
Sensus Communis, 7. sub sincipite apprehendit res perceptas a Sensibus externis.
Phantasia, 6. sub vertice, dijudicat res istas, cogitat, somniat.
Memoria, 8. sub occipitio, recondit singula & depromit: deperdit quædam, & hoc est oblivio.
Somnus, est requies Sensuum.
The Soul of Man. XLIII. Anima hominis.
The Soul is the Life of the Body, one in the whole.
Only Vegetative in Plants;
Withal Sensitive in Animals;
And also rational in Men.
This consisteth in three things:
In the Understanding, whereby it judgeth and understandeth a thing good and evil, or true, or apparent.
In the Will, whereby it chooseth, and desireth, or rejecteth, and misliketh a thing known.
In the Mind, whereby it pursueth the Good chosen or avoideth the Evil rejected.
Hence is Hope and Fear in the desire, and dislike.
Hence is Love and Joy, in the Fruition:
But Anger and Grief, in suffering.
The true judgment of a thing is Knowledge; the false, is Error, Opinion and Suspicion.
Anima est vita corporis, una in toto.
Tantùm Vegetativa in Plantis;
Simul Sensitiva in Animalibus;
Etiam Rationalis in Homine.
Hæc consistet in tribus:
In Mente (Intellectu) quâ cognoscit, & intelligit, bonum ac malum, vel verum, vel apparens.
In Voluntate, quâ eligit, & concupiscit, aut rejicit, & aversatur cognitum.
In Animo, quo prosequitur Bonum electum, vel fugit Malum rejectum.
Hinc Spes & Timor, in cupidine, & aversatione:
Hinc Amor & Gaudium, in fruitione:
Sed Ira ac Dolor, in passione.
Vera cognitio rei, est Scientia; falsa, Error, Opinio, Suspicio.

Figure 24: Chapters 42 (The Outward and Inward Senses) and 43 (The Soul of Man) of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (1887). Public domain.

After introducing different stages of human, Comenius discussed 'The Outward and Inward Senses' and 'The Soul of Man' (shown as above). These two chapters (see figure 24) cover important aspects of human perception and the concept of the soul, depicting the human figure with arms outstretched, symbolising the soul's entirety in relation to the body. This represents the spiritual and rational aspects of human existence, which are unique to mankind.

In these two chapters, Comenius begins with the five traditional outward senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch) and describes how each responds to the many stimuli from the outside world. The eye, for instance, can see colours, the ear can hear sounds, and the hand can recognise texture and temperature. The inward senses refer to faculties that process the information received by the outward senses. Comenius explains three inward senses, including: Common Sense, Phantasy (Imagination), and the soul. The vegetative aspect of a plant's soul is said to guide its growth and various life functions, while the sensitive part governs an animal's emotions and movements, and the rational component oversees a person's intellect,

will, and reasoning. This section educates young pupils about the moral and intellectual concepts of good and evil, making choices, and how their emotions influence those decisions. It connects the soul's intellectual and moral aspects and teaches moral thinking from an early age. Comenius believes that a rational mind is crucial because it enables pupils to understand how their emotions and feelings shape their moral decisions and behaviours. Comenius discusses both the senses and the capacities of the soul to demonstrate how crucial it is to strike a balance between using one's senses to learn and using one's intellect to think about things in a rational and moral manner. In the following Chapter CIX (109) titled Moral Philosophy, Comenius starts to talk about a new category, 'Moral Philosophy'.



(136)

Moral Philosophy. CIX. Ethica.

This *Life* is a *way*, or a *place divided into two ways*, like *Pythagoras's Letter* Y. broad, 1. on the left hand track; narrow, 2. on the right; that belongs to *Vice*, 3. this to *Vertue*, 4.

Mind, Young Man, 5. imitate *Hercules*: leave the left hand way, turn from Vice; the *Entrance*, 6. is fair, but the *End*, 7. is ugly and steep down.

Go on the right hand, though it be thorny, 8. no way is unpassible to vertue; follow whither vertue leadeth

Vita hæc est *via*, sive *Bivium*, simile Litteræ *Pithagoricæ* Y. latum, 1. sinistro tramite angustum, 2. dextro; ille *Vitii*, 3. est hic *Virtutis*, 4.

Adverte juvenis, 5. imitare *Herculem;* linque sinistram, aversare Vitium; *Aditus* speciosus, 6. sed *Exitus*, 7. turpis & præceps.

Dextera ingredere, utut spinosa, 8. nulla via invia virtuti; sequere quâ viâ ducit virtus

(137)

through *narrow places* to *stately palaces*, to the *Tower of honour*, 9.

Keep the middle and streight *path*, and thou shalt go very safe.

Take heed thou do not go too much on the right hand, 10.

Bridle in, 12. the wild Horse, 11. of Affection, lest thou fall down headlong.

See thou dost not go amiss on the left hand, 13. in an ass-like sluggishness, 14. but go onwards constantly, persevere to the end, and thou shalt be crown'd, 15.

per *angusta*, ad *augusta*, ad *Arcem honoris*, 9.

Tene medium & rectum *tramitem;* ibis tutissimus.

Cave excedas ad dextram, 10.

Compesce freno, 12. equum ferocem, 11. Affectûs ne præceps fias.

Cave deficias ad sinistram, 13. segnitie asininâ, 14. sed progredere constanter pertende ad finem, & coronaberis, 15.

Figure 25: Chapter 109 (Moral Philosophy) of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (1887). Public domain.

In the image (see figure 25), three people stand at an intersection where two roads split, one wide and the other narrow, leading towards a castle in the distance. Two of them waved their hands, indicating to the other to follow the people and walk towards the wider road. In the text, Comenius uses the well-known myth of the

Herculean Choice of Ways as an analogy to describe a human's life decision: life is a journey where individuals are presented with two paths, which are 'virtue' and 'vice'. When drawing the description of this scenario, he also incorporates a symbolic fork in the road similar to Pythagoras' Letter Y, with the two branches meaning the two different routes, one wide and level but leading to destruction, and the other narrow and steep but leading to the throne, and the single stem represents the starting point of childhood or moral innocence, and the two branches represent the divergence of paths—one leading to moral integrity and the other to moral decay (Tucker, 2003). As an illustrative book, here is one of the few times in this book where the author clearly states his intentions. Instead of enumerating and describing the things that exist in this world, Comenius directs students to learn Herculean to make hard decisions by choosing the difficult but promising path of life, because he thinks that vice, though easier, leads to ruin, whereas virtue, though harder, leads to honour and success. Therefore, in the following chapters 110-117, Comenius describes eight virtues that he desires to promote, which are Prudence, Diligence, Temperance, Fortitude, Patience, Humanity, Justice and Liberality.

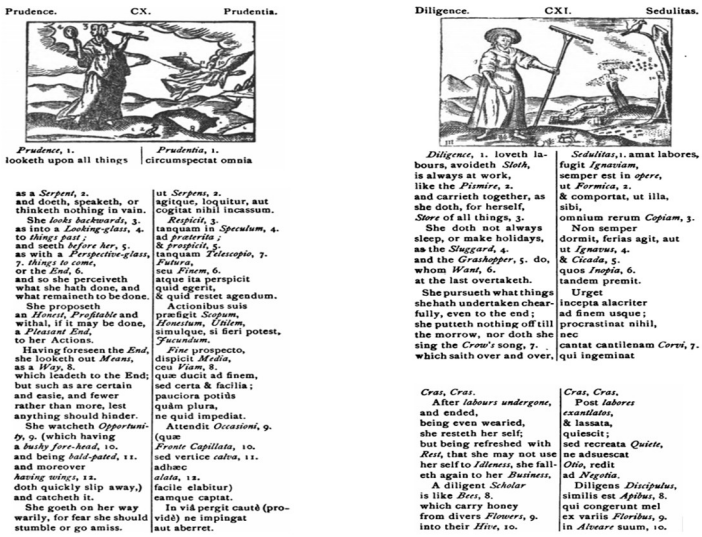


Figure 26: Chapters 110 (Prudence) and 111 (Diligence) of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (1887). Public domain.

The first virtue that Comenius wants to promote is 'Prudence'. The virtue of Prudence (see Figure 26) is depicted as a female figure[24] with two side faces and a mirror and a telescope in each hand, surrounded by a snake and a human figure with a plump forehead, bare back of the head, and a pair of large wings. In general, the drawings and text suggest that Prudence is a careful, introspective character who carefully considers all aspects of a situation before making a choice.

The second virtue that Comenius wants to promote is 'Diligence'. In the image (see Figure 26), 'Diligence' is depicted as a strong woman planting in a field, wearing simple clothes, a straw hat to shield her from the sun, a nail harrow in one hand and a scythe in the other. The idea of 'diligence' is like a bee that visits different flowers and brings juice back to its home. 'Diligence' is shown to always be working, planning, and gathering, which makes her always effective.

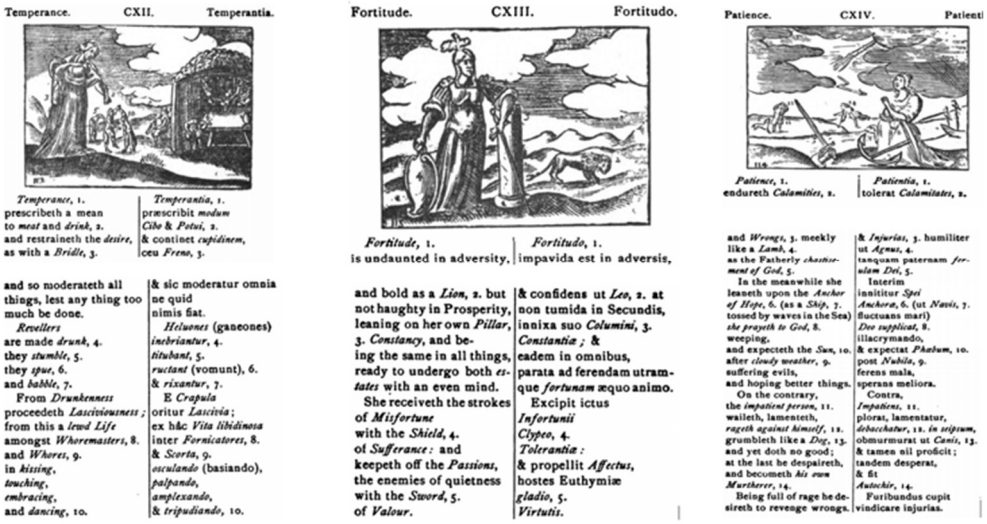


Figure 27: Chapters 112 (Temperance), 113 (Fortitude) and 114 (Patience) of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (1887). Public domain.

[24] In the section, Comenius uses personalisation to personalise all of these virtues as female characters. This can be said as a tradition similar with wisdom was depicted as a female figure in Proverbs, Job, Sirach, Wisdom and Baruch (Sinnott, 2017).

The third virtue that Comenius wants to promote is ‘Temperance’. In the picture (see Figure 27), ‘Temperance’ is depicted as a tall woman standing beside a buggy, holding a bridle, suggesting she can control and restrain. There are other people sitting in a crooked line next to the buggy, and some seem to be fighting. In general, Comenius wants to remind people to regulate their human desires and avoid overindulgence to prevent physical and moral degradation.

The fourth virtue that Comenius wishes to promote is ‘Fortitude’ (see Figure 27). ‘Fortitude’ is shown as a powerful, armoured female figure standing alone in a wide field, surrounded by an aggressive animal that looks like a lion. She is resting against a solid stone pillar, holding a shield and a sword, suggesting she is ready to combat wild animals or defend herself against any other threat. In general, ‘Fortitude’ indicates the capacity to stay fearless and constant in the face of adversity, facing and fighting with misfortune with elegance, strength, and perseverance in all circumstances.

The fifth virtue that Comenius wishes to promote is ‘Patience’. From the picture (see Figure 27), it can be seen that ‘Patience’ is depicted as a female figure sitting calmly, despite the howling wind and torrential rain. There is a ship that has hit the rocks, an anchor beside her, and a hand holding a sword facing her. In the distance, some people and a dog can be seen; their activity is unclear, but it felt like they were irritated. According to the text, Comenius suggests that being patient means always believing in God, so one can endure suffering and wrongs with meekness and hope.

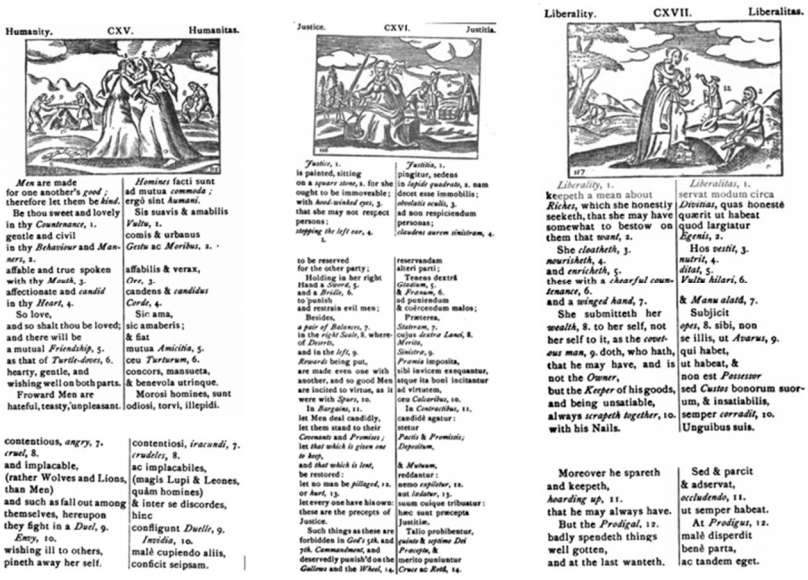


Figure 28: Chapters 115 (Humanity), 116 (Justice) and 117 (Liberality) of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (1887). Public domain.

In the next chapter, Comenius introduces the sixth virtue he intends to tell is 'Humanity'. In the image (see Figure 28), two female figures embrace in a friendly setting. A pair of turtledoves were beak to beak next to the feet of these two women, also in a friendly and loving atmosphere. In the distance, two men were quarrelling, two others were duelling with their swords pointed at each other, and one was hiding in the shadows of a mound of dirt, feeling sorry for himself. According to the text description, by illustrating examples of humanity and the human condition in line with Christian beliefs, Comenius urges people to be kind and loving and to live for the benefit of one another, avoiding the destructive powers of rage, hatred, and jealousy.

The seventh virtue Comenius promotes is 'Justice'. In the image (see Figure 28), Justice is depicted as a female figure sitting on a square stone, with her eyes blindfolded so she cannot see the identity of the person being judged, but can only make judgments based on the facts. She holds a scale in one hand and a sword in the other. Behind her in the distance, there are some people who are arguing about something, and some people seem to be hurt. To find out about the details, the descriptive text gives some clues. In general, Comenius highlighted that individuals

who possess the virtue of 'Justice' should be fair, impartial, and morally correct. This would enable this society to be an honest and just environment in which good actions are rewarded and misconduct is punished.

The eighth and the last virtue Comenius intends to promote here is 'Liberality'. The picture (see Figure 28) depicts a female figure who is handing money to a man seated beside the road. In the distance, there seems to be someone who is doing the same kind of action. In general, to compare with the greedy man who plans only for himself, Comenius suggested that people with the virtue of Liberality should acquire wealth honestly and use it to help those in need, so the society can be united and prosper together.

After examining the clear moral framework of the eight virtues (Prudence, Diligence, Temperance, Fortitude, Patience, Humanity, Justice, and Liberality), it can be seen that Comenius aims to guide individuals towards a virtuous life. Now, the discussion turns to what relation is intended to improve among these chapters.

4.2.3.4.2. What Relation is Intended to be Improved?

As can be seen from the demonstration chapters, in addition to the age-specific qualities that characterise human beings and their differences in the previous section, here Comenius also depicts the inner and outer senses of man, and Comenius is no longer mainly about how language represents the world, but about how the learner comes to know properly.

Through studying these chapters, children are gradually guided towards a new mode of conduct. In this educational process, pupils progressively learn that knowledge is not merely a matter of rote memorisation and identification, but should incorporate discernment and decision-making, enabling them to distinguish truth from falsehood

and virtue from vice. The relation between students and the ability to take wise action is intended to be improved.

4.2.3.4.3. Into What?

By describing the outer and inner senses, the faculties of the rational soul, and the variety of virtues, he links perception, judgement, and action, so that students can thus come to know things more fully, to know that they possess both senses and inner powers, and thus to understand that they have the capacity to perceive both the inner and the outer, and the capacity to judge right from wrong and the ability to act wisely. That is to say, the relation between the students and their ability to take action wisely is improved.

4.2.3.4.4. How is this Relation Improved?

In Relation 1 discussed above in the previous section, this thesis addressed how the focus of education is on developing students' pronunciation of the new language. In Relation 2, Comenius focuses on vocabulary recognition and naming to link words to things. Relation 3 focuses on educating students to combine words into sentences and longer speeches. Relation 4 continues to exert a subtle influence on students through the content and layout of *Orbis Pictus*. In these sample chapters of the fourth relation, following training pupils to identify or name things, Comenius begins to show them what actions they should take and how they should go about them when they grasp the essential characteristics of things through their senses, their inner faculties, and their rational soul. This advanced perspective on perception gives pupils a connection to the essence of objects, enabling them to describe them truthfully and interact with them wisely.

For example, in the sample chapter 'Outward and Inward Senses', Comenius introduces human beings by describing how the outer senses receive information,

such as colours and sounds; the inner senses collect, organise, and store these impressions; and the rational soul makes judgements and decisions about them. This presentation of the structure of knowledge shows that Comenius is not merely describing the organs and presenting their functions. At the same time, in this sample chapter, numbered notes and concise explanations link each part of the brain to specific functions, enabling pupils to recognise their capacities for sight, hearing, imagination, memory, and judgement. This fosters their understanding that they can reason, decide, and act wisely within the scope of their acquired knowledge.

This understanding is achieved through a process that progresses from perception to judgement. Learners first encounter objects through their senses, particularly sight, and then learn to name and distinguish them through language. However, sensory perception and linguistic naming alone are not sufficient. They must be organised through understanding, so that learners can grasp the nature of objects, their differences, their uses, and how to use them correctly. Comenius thus presents knowledge as a systematic progression from perceivable appearances towards the essence, order and proper use of things, rather than a mere accumulation of isolated facts, thus preparing learners to act responsibly within the created world. Through this process, it seems that Comenius sets out the educational structure of the entire work: images, words, and descriptions are of educational value because they help learners see beyond appearances to the essence of things, thereby guiding them towards sound understanding, wise reasoning and right doing.

4.2.3.4.5. Why does this Relation Need to be Improved?

In the sample chapters mentioned in this book, Comenius presents something a little different from most of the chapters in *Orbis Pictus*. For example, without further explanation from teachers, students may or may not understand the definition of ‘soul’ mentioned in these chapters because they don’t really have the chance to see

it in the real world. Rather than merely depicting objects that can be seen everywhere, he presents concepts requiring comprehension and discernment. In this sense, *Orbis Pictus* exceeds mere neutral descriptions of sounds, words, and objects, because if it is true, this book would remain a basic encyclopaedia. In fact, it can be inferred that Comenius' intention, against the background of religious conflict and social upheaval in the seventeenth century, as discussed in Section 4.1.1, was that pupils should learn the true names of things in the real world, and also learn to use their senses correctly, form right judgements, and thus speak and act wisely.

Consequently, the fourth relation is of great importance, as it aims to improve the relation between students and their own behaviour. The various objects of the world are not merely presented as neutral information, but as the foundation for learning how to act. Learners are guided to recognise that both the deployment of their senses and the exercise of their reason can be organised according to principles of wisdom or folly, correctness or error. In this context, for Comenius, the ultimate goal of education may lie not merely in expanding children's store of knowledge, but rather in improving their relation with the capacity to act and live well. As Comenius states in the opening dialogue, children are taught that wisdom is 'to understand rightly, to do rightly, to speak out rightly all that is necessary'.

In summary, through the study of the chapters on the senses, the soul, moral philosophy, and virtue, learners are guided to judge and act wisely after learning to perceive the world truly. In this sense, action is inevitably and appropriately realised following the knowledge acquisition in the learning process. Relation 4 indicates that *Orbis Pictus* presents young learners with a world in which knowledge is linked to action; in this world, students acquire knowledge and are guided to shape their actions using that knowledge, which lays the foundations for Relation 5. In the next

chapter, the discussion turns to the fifth relation that shifts from individual behaviour to the broader world order.

4.2.3.5. From the Book Structure to the World Framework: Understanding Hierarchy and Divine Order

In the previous four chapters, this thesis has discussed how *Orbis Pictus* could be used to improve students' understanding of phonetics and pronunciation, vocabulary and naming, and narrative, speech, and other integrated language skills that build on the previous two, as well as how to act rightly after right knowing all this knowledge. This chapter attempts to explore the fifth relation implied by the book that Comenius intended to improve students with. Let us now look at some sample chapters first.

4.2.3.5.1. Description of the Sample Chapters

As the first chapter in the main part of *Orbis Pictus,* Comenius introduced readers and users of the book to the concept of God (see the figure below). On this page, it can be seen that the subject that the author introduced is titled 'God' in English and 'Deus' in Latin, which indicates that the author Comenius intends to present a fundamental theological concept of God for students to understand. Below the topic is a picture of a bright sun with a triangular eye in the middle. This eye looks like the 'Eye of

Providence[25]' that usually symbolises God's all-knowingness and all-powerfulness (Koenderink, 2014).

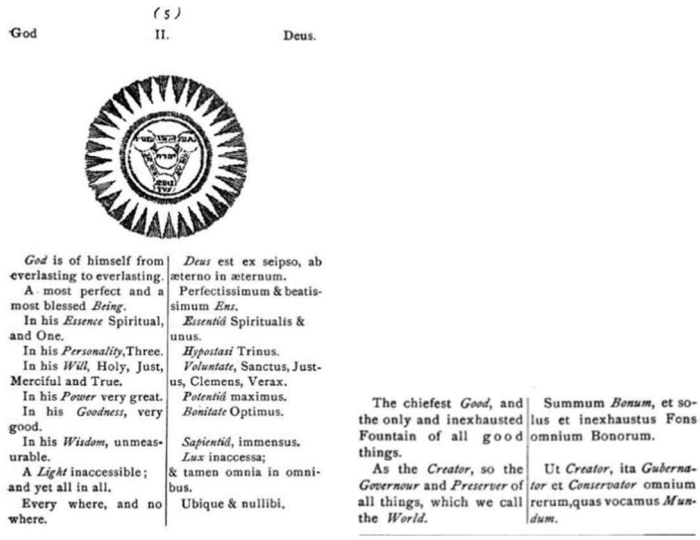


Figure 29: Chapter 2 (God) of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (1887). Public domain.

The descriptive text (see Figure 29) emphasises that God lives eternally, meaning God has no beginning or end. Comenius says in the book that God is not material but spiritual, meaning God is divine, immaterial, and the only true God. He is the personification of compassion, mercy, and honesty, and He possesses the ultimate power to make everything happen according to His desire. God's wisdom is so great

[25] Koenderink (2014) prefers to refer to the 'Eye of Providence' as the 'All Seeing Eye', a term that serves as a neutral and functional definition. He provides an overview of the concept of the 'All Seeing Eye', that is, the omniscient eye is always alert; The eye of omniscience has nothing to hide; The eye of omniscience sees things as they really are; That the Eye of Omniscience makes no mistakes or hallucinations; That the eye of omniscience sees the world as it really is. Koenderink asserts that the 'All Seeing Eye' represents the gold standard of viewing. Accurate perception is achieved when we can emulate the Omniscient Eye, while failure to accomplish this results in a condition of ignorance. The reference to the 'All Seeing Eye' is utilised in conjunction with images depicting God in the book *Orbis Pictus*, reflecting Comenius' belief in God's omniscience and the ability to perceive the true nature of reality while leaving no place for error to hide. Although Koenderink posits that the 'All Seeing Eye' may be a belief or a delusion (Koenderink, 2014).

that it goes beyond what humans can understand. The scriptures also stress that God is everywhere (in the universe and not only in one place). People think of God as the Creator and Sustainer of all good things. He keeps the world going and in order by actively controlling and feeding everything.

Following the chapter introducing the concept of God, Comenius sets the next chapters with the titles of 'World' and 'Heaven'. The illustration of 'world' depicts an image of the natural world with the sky, clouds, birds, fish, trees, fields, beasts, and men, and the illustration of 'Heaven' depicts a celestial picture with the sun, moon and stars encircling the earth, encased in a circular frame.



Figure 30: Chapters 3 (The World) and 4 (The Heaven) of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (1887). Public domain.

In the two chapters above (see Figure 30), it appears that Comenius intends to expose children to the fundamental elements of the natural world. He divides these elements into three categories: heaven, water, and earth, and lists the organisms contained in each category (e.g., stars in the sky, birds in the air, fish in the water, and animals and humans on land).

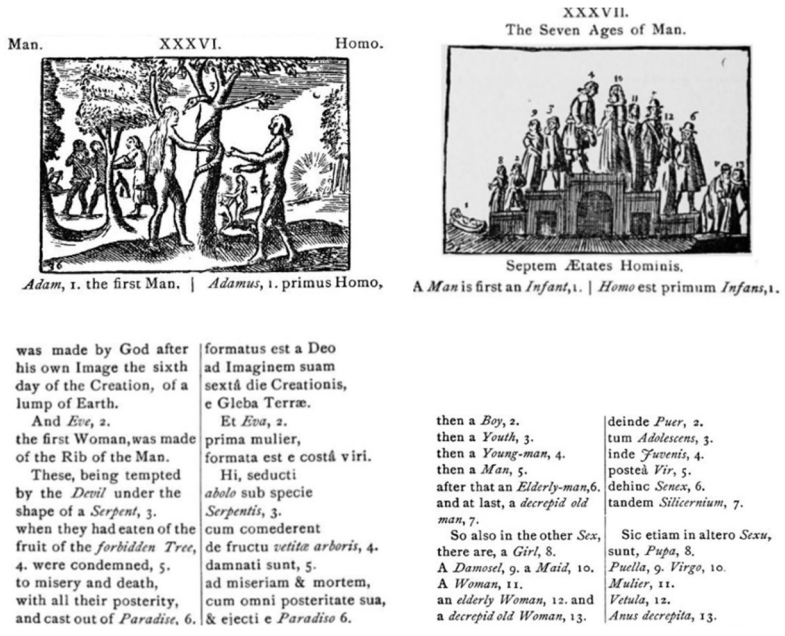
In the following chapters, Comenius discussed a variety of natural components. The chapter of 'Fire' presents a stove with flint, steel, coal, matches, candles, and other things used to start a fire. The Chapter of 'Air' illustrates light breezes, earthquakes, strong storms, and winds. The Chapter of 'Water' discusses lakes, rivers, and seas. The Chapter 'Clouds' illustrates clouds, rain, snow, and fog. 'Earth' depicts numerous terrestrial features, including mountains, valleys, hills, caverns, fields, and forests.

In the following chapters, 'Fruits of the Earth' portrays a variety of plant and geological elements, including meadows, fields, mushrooms, strawberries, myrtle trees, metals, stones, and minerals; 'Flowers' shows a collection of flowers in a decorative pot, set within a window view that looks onto a garden, highlighting various species of flowers; 'Potherbs' shows a garden plot where various vegetables grow, with orderly rows of crops such as lettuce, onions, and other common kitchen garden plants. 'Corn' depicts a field of corn growing in neat rows, with a farmer harvesting the crops, showing different types of grain plants; 'Shrubs' shows shrubs growing near water, such as Rushes, Reeds, and Bulrushes.

In the following chapters, 'Living Creatures and First Birds' depicts a variety of birds, focusing on their natural habitats and behaviours; 'Tame Fowls' and 'Singing Birds' showcase various singing birds and waterfowl, showing them perched on trees and near bodies of water; 'Ravenous Birds' like the Eagle and Vulture, are depicted soaring above prey, while 'four-footed beasts' such as Dogs and Cats are shown near human dwellings; 'Wild-Cattle and Labouring Beasts' depict wild cattle like Buffaloes and Elephants alongside domestic labouring animals such as Oxen and Horses pulling loads; 'Wild Beasts' like Lions and Tigers are depicted in their natural habitats, while 'Serpents and other crawling creatures' are shown among rocks and trees.

In Chapters 35-41 of *Orbis Pictus*, Comenius introduces knowledge of humans, including the first man in the world, the seven ages of man, the senses of man, the soul of man, and deformed people. Mostly, he describes how human beings come

into the world and grow up until death, and especially in Chapter 42, he indicates that humans can experience emotions such as hope, fear, desire, and hatred. For him, first, all these emotions are reasonable, and one should not be blamed for having them because they are natural; however, they should be managed rationally, and the ability to be rational is founded in knowledge. Some of these chapters are examined here.


Man. XXXVI. Homo.

Adam, 1. the first Man. | *Adamus*, 1. primus Homo,

was made by God after his own Image the sixth day of the Creation, of a lump of Earth.
And *Eve*, 2. the first Woman, was made of the Rib of the Man.
These, being tempted by the *Devil* under the shape of a *Serpent*, 3. when they had eaten of the fruit of the *forbidden Tree*, 4. were condemned, 5. to misery and death, with all their posterity, and cast out of *Paradise*, 6.

formatus est a Deo ad Imaginem suam sextâ die Creationis, e Gleba Terræ.
Et *Eva*, 2. prima mulier, formata est e costâ viri.
Hi, seducti *abolo* sub specie *Serpentis*, 3. cum comederent de fructu *vetitæ arboris*, 4. damnati sunt, 5. ad miseriam & mortem, cum omni posteritate sua, & ejecti e *Paradiso* 6.

XXXVII.
The Seven Ages of Man.

Septem Ætates Hominis.

A *Man* is first an *Infant*, 1. | *Homo* est primum *Infans*, 1.

then a *Boy*, 2. then a *Youth*, 3. then a *Young-man*, 4. then a *Man*, 5. after that an *Elderly-man*, 6. and at last, a *decrepid old man*, 7.
So also in the other *Sex*, there are, a *Girl*, 8. A *Damosel*, 9. a *Maid*, 10. A *Woman*, 11. an *elderly Woman*, 12. and a *decrepid old Woman*, 13.

deinde *Puer*, 2. tum *Adolescens*, 3. inde *Juvenis*, 4. posteà *Vir*, 5. dehinc *Senex*, 6. tandem *Silicernium*, 7.
Sic etiam in altero *Sexu*, sunt, *Pupa*, 8. *Puella*, 9. *Virgo*, 10. *Mulier*, 11. *Vetula*, 12. *Anus decrepita*, 13.

Figure 31: Chapters 36 (Man) and 37 (The Seven Ages of Man) of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (1887). Public domain.

After providing the pupils with an introduction to the natural components of the world, Comenius introduced the theme of 'Man,' which focused especially on the Biblical story of the creation and fall of the most recent common ancestor, Adam and Eve. In this chapter (see Figure 31), Adam and Eve stand in the centre of the image under the forbidden tree, with a serpent representing the devil coiled around its trunk. Eve appears to be offering Adam the fruit of the tree, while in the background, an angel appears to be casting Adam and Eve out of this place.

In the next section, Comenius illustrates the stages of human existence to convey the concept of the 'seven ages of man', the stages through which man passes (see Figure

32). The idea behind this piece of writing is that life is like a cycle, with birth and death inevitable parts of it.

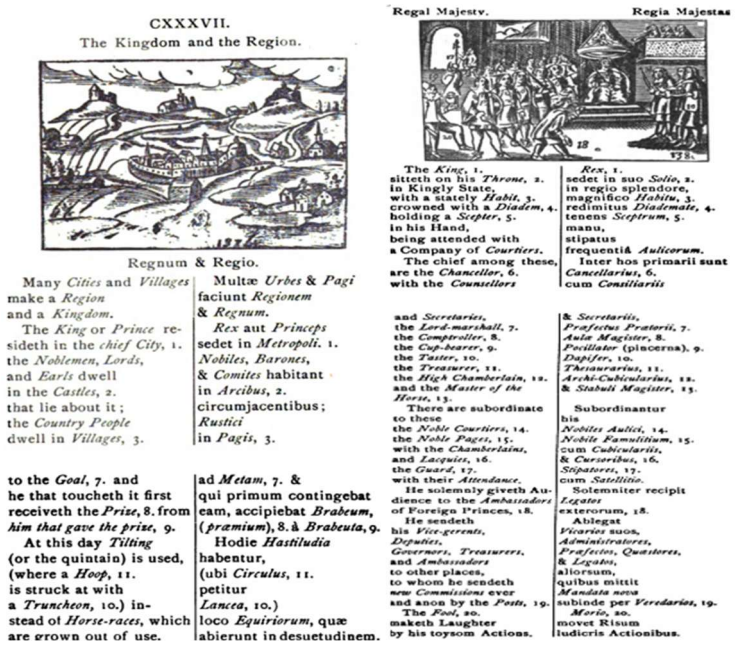
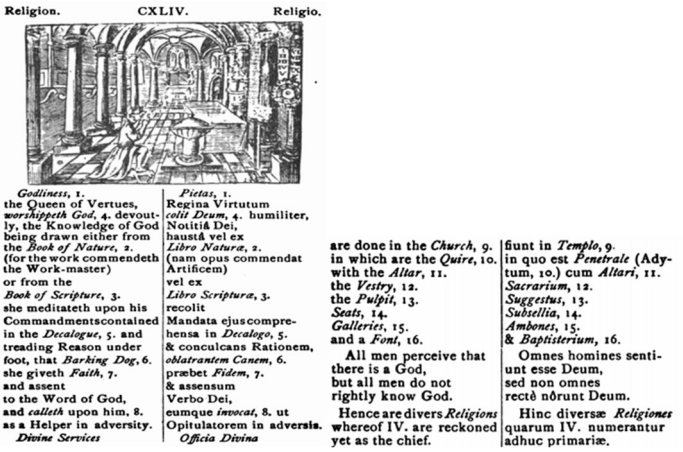

CXXXVII.
The Kingdom and the Region.
Regnum & Regio.
Many *Cities* and *Villages* make a *Region* and a *Kingdom*.
The *King* or *Prince* resideth in the *chief City*, 1. the *Noblemen*, *Lords*, and *Earls* dwell in the *Castles*, 2. that lie about it; the *Country People* dwell in *Villages*, 3.
Multæ *Urbes* & *Pagi* faciunt *Regionem* & *Regnum*.
Rex aut *Princeps* sedet in *Metropoli*. 1. *Nobiles*, *Barones*, & *Comites* habitant in *Arcibus*, 2. circumjacentibus; *Rustici* in *Pagis*, 3.
to the *Goal*, 7. and he that toucheth it first receiveth the *Prize*, 8. from *him that gave the prize*, 9.
At this day *Tilting* (or the quintain) is used, (where a *Hoop*, 11. is struck at with a *Truncheon*, 10.) instead of *Horse-races*, which are grown out of use.
ad *Metam*, 7. & qui primum contingebat eam, accipiebat *Brabeum*, (*præmium*), 8. à *Brabeuta*, 9.
Hodie *Hastiludia* habentur, (ubi *Circulus*, 11. petitur *Lancea*, 10.) loco *Equiriorum*, quæ abierunt in desuetudinem.
Regal Majesty.
Regia Majestas
The *King*, 1. sitteth on his *Throne*, 2. in Kingly State, with a stately *Habit*, 3. crowned with a *Diadem*, 4. holding a *Scepter*, 5. in his Hand, being attended with a Company of *Courtiers*.
The chief among these, are the *Chancellor*, 6. with the *Counsellors* and *Secretaries*, the *Lord-marshall*, 7. the *Comptroller*, 8. the *Cup-bearer*, 9. the *Taster*, 10. the *Treasurer*, 11. the *High Chamberlain*, 12. and the *Master of the Horse*, 13.
There are subordinate to these, the *Noble Courtiers*, 14. the *Noble Pages*, 15. with the *Chamberlains*, and *Lacquies*, 16. the *Guard*, 17. with their *Attendance*.
He solemnly giveth Audience to the *Ambassadors* of Foreign Princes, 18.
He sendeth his *Vice-gerents*, *Deputies*, *Governors*, *Treasurers*, and *Ambassadors* to other places, to whom he sendeth *new Commissions* ever and anon by the *Posts*, 19.
The *Fool*, 20. maketh Laughter by his toysom Actions.
Rex, 1. sedet in suo *Solio*, 2. in regio splendore, magnifico *Habitu*, 3. redimitus *Diademate*, 4. tenens *Sceptrum*, 5. manu, stipatus frequentiâ *Aulicorum*.
Inter hos primarii sunt *Cancellarius*, 6. cum *Consiliariis* & *Secretariis*, *Præfectus Prætorii*, 7. *Aulæ Magister*, 8. *Pocillator* (pincerna), 9. *Dapifer*, 10. *Thesaurarius*, 11. *Archi-Cubicularius*, 12. & *Stabuli Magister*, 13.
Subordinantur his *Nobiles Aulici*, 14. *Nobile Famulitium*, 15. cum *Cubiculariis*, & *Cursoribus*, 16. *Stipatores*, 17. cum *Satellitio*.
Solemniter recipit *Legatos* exterorum, 18.
Ablegat *Vicarios* suos, *Administratores*, *Præfectos*, *Quæstores*, & *Legatos*, aliorsum, quibus mittit *Mandata nova* subinde per *Veredarios*, 19.
Morio, 20. movet Risum ludicris Actionibus.

Figure 32: Chapters 137 (The Kingdom and the Region) and 138 (Regal Majesty) of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (1887). Public domain.

In the Chapter of 'The Kingdom and the Region' (Chapter 137), Comenius illustrates the structure and organisation of a Kingdom or region (see Figure 32). From the picture, a large, built-up area can be seen in the centre with houses and a church, surrounded by many smaller areas with clusters of houses and villages. Then, in the next chapter, Comenius illustrated the concept of 'Regal Majesty'. The picture shows the king seated on a throne, wearing a crown. Many soldiers and ministers are standing on the ground and bowing to the king. Furthermore, the following chapters, including 'The Soldier', 'The Camp', 'The Army and the Fight', 'The Sea-Fight' and 'The Besieging of a City', illustrate various aspects of military organisation and political warfare in Comenius' time.



Religion. CXLIV. Religio.

Godliness, 1. the Queen of Vertues, *worshippeth God*, 4. devoutly, the Knowledge of God being drawn either from the *Book of Nature*, 2. (for the work commendeth the Work-master) or from the *Book of Scripture*, 3. she meditateth upon his Commandments contained in the *Decalogue*, 5. and treading Reason under foot, that *Barking Dog*, 6. she giveth *Faith*, 7. and assent to the Word of God, and *calleth* upon him, 8. as a Helper in adversity.

Pietas, 1. Regina Virtutum *colit Deum*, 4. humiliter, Notitiâ Dei, haustâ vel ex *Libro Naturæ*, 2. (nam opus commendat Artificem) vel ex *Libro Scripturæ*, 3. recolit Mandata ejus comprehensa in *Decalogo*, 5. & conculcans Rationem, *oblatrantem Canem*, 6. præbet *Fidem*, 7. & assensum Verbo Dei, eumque *invocat*, 8. ut Opitulatorem in adversis.

Divine Services are done in the *Church*, 9. in which are the *Quire*, 10. with the *Altar*, 11. the *Vestry*, 12. the *Pulpit*, 13. *Seats*, 14. *Galleries*, 15. and a *Font*, 16.

Officia Divina fiunt in *Templo*, 9. in quo est *Penetrale* (Adytum, 10.) cum *Altari*, 11. *Sacrarium*, 12. *Suggestus*, 13. *Subsellia*, 14. *Ambones*, 15. & *Baptisterium*, 16.

All men perceive that there is a God, but all men do not rightly know God.

Omnes homines sentiunt esse Deum, sed non omnes rectè nôrunt Deum.

Hence are divers *Religions* whereof IV. are reckoned yet as the chief.

Hinc diversæ *Religiones* quarum IV. numerantur adhuc primariæ.

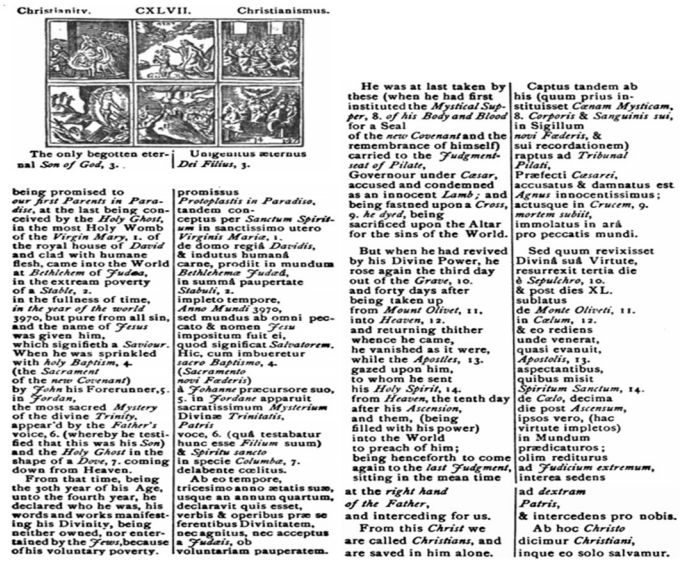
Figure 33: Chapter 144 ('Religion') of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (1887). Public domain.

After addressing the necessary knowledge of the empire and political warfare, Comenius then guides the reader to the knowledge about the 'Religion' (Chapter 144). The picture (see Figure 33) shows a large space that resembles the interior of a Gothic church, with an altar in the centre. A man in robes is worshipping reverently in front of the altar in this holy place. According to the text, as the queen of virtues, godliness worships God with all her heart and learns about God from either the Book of Nature[26] (for the works reveal the creator of work) or the Book of Scripture[27]. She thinks about God's rules in the Ten Commandments. She believed in God and did what He said. She appealed to God for help whenever she was in danger. There is a God, but not everyone can see Him for who He really is. The church has a portico, an altar, a chapel, a pulpit, seating, a narthex, and a baptismal font. It's where people go to pray. In this

[26] The *Book of Nature* is not a real physical book but a philosophical and religious idea or concept that views nature as a source of knowledge and understanding. It also suggests that studying the 'book' would lead to understanding its creator, which means God himself, so it was used as a complementary source to the Bible for people to understand God.

[27] The *Book of Scripture* refers to the Bible.

way, there are many faiths, with the fourth one being the most important. In the next chapters, Comenius introduces religions starting from the Chapter ‘Christianity’.


Christianity. CXLVII. Christianismus.

The only begotten eternal *Son of God*, 3. | Unigenitus æternus *Dei Filius*, 3.

being promised to *our first Parents in Paradise*, at the last being conceived by the *Holy Ghost*, in the most Holy Womb of the *Virgin Mary*, 1. of the royal house of *David* and clad with humane flesh, came into the World at *Bethlehem* of *Judæa*, in the extream poverty of a *Stable*, 2. in the fullness of time, *in the year of the world* 3970, but pure from all sin, and the name of *Jesus* was given him, which signifieth a *Saviour*. When he was sprinkled with *holy Baptism*, 4. (the *Sacrament* of the *new Covenant*) by *John* his Forerunner, 5. in *Jordan*, the most sacred *Mystery* of the divine *Trinity*, appear'd by the *Father's* voice, 6. (whereby he testified that this was his *Son*) and the *Holy Ghost* in the shape of a *Dove*, 7. coming down from Heaven.

From that time, being the 30th year of his Age, unto the fourth year, he declared who he was, his words and works manifesting his Divinity, being neither owned, nor entertained by the *Jews*, because of his voluntary poverty.

promissus *Protoplastis in Paradiso*, tandem conceptus per *Sanctum Spiritum* in sanctissimo utero *Virginis Mariæ*, 1. de domo regiâ *Davidis*, & indutus humanâ carne, prodiit in mundum *Bethlehemæ Judææ*, in summâ paupertate *Stabuli*, 2. impleto tempore, *Anno Mundi* 3970, sed mundus ab omni peccato & nomen *Jesu* impositum fuit ei, quod significat *Salvatorem*. Hic, cum imbueretur *sacro Baptismo*, 4. (*Sacramento novi Fœderis*) à *Johanne* præcursore suo, 5. in *Jordane* apparuit sacratissimum *Mysterium* Divinæ *Trinitatis*, *Patris* voce, 6. (quâ testabatur hunc esse *Filium* suum) & *Spiritu sancto* in specie *Columbæ*, 7. delabente cœlitus.

Ab eo tempore, tricesimo anno ætatis suæ, usque ad annum quartum, declaravit quis esset, verbis & operibus præ se ferentibus Divinitatem, nec agnitus, nec acceptus a *Judæis*, ob voluntariam pauperatem.

He was at last taken by these (when he had first instituted the *Mystical Supper*, 8. *of his Body and Blood* for a Seal of the *new Covenant* and the remembrance of himself) carried to the *Judgment-seat of Pilate*, Governour under *Cæsar*, accused and condemned as an innocent *Lamb*; and being fastned upon a *Cross*, 9. *he dyed*, being sacrificed upon the Altar for the sins of the World.

But when he had revived by his Divine Power, he rose again the third day out of the *Grave*, 10. and forty days after being taken up from *Mount Olivet*, 11. into *Heaven*, 12. and returning thither whence he came, he vanished as it were, while the *Apostles*, 13. gazed upon him, to whom he sent his *Holy Spirit*, 14. from *Heaven*, the tenth day after his *Ascension*, and them, (being filled with his power) into the World to preach of him; being henceforth to come again to the *last Judgment*, sitting in the mean time at the *right hand of the Father*, and interceding for us.

From this *Christ* we are called *Christians*, and are saved in him alone.

Captus tandem ab his (quum prius instituisset *Cœnam Mysticam*, 8. *Corporis* & *Sanguinis sui*, in Sigillum *novi Fœderis*, & sui recordationem) raptus ad *Tribunal Pilati*, Præfecti *Cæsarei*, accusatus & damnatus est *Agnus* innocentissimus; actusque in *Crucem*, 9. *mortem subiit*, immolatus in arâ pro peccatis mundi.

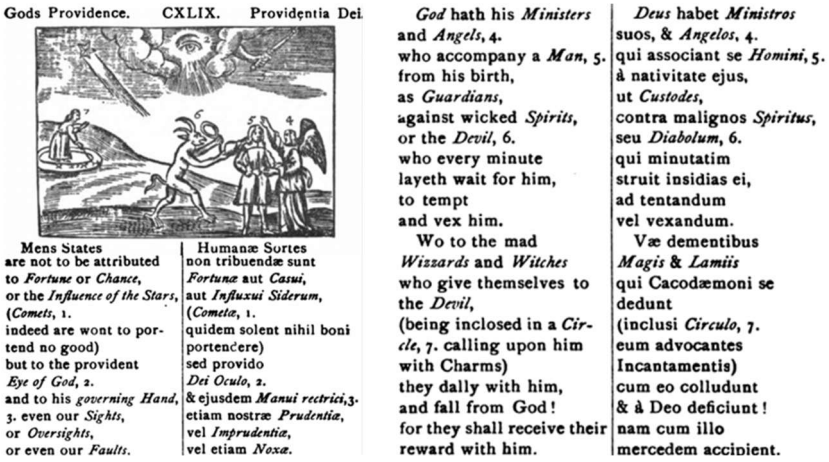
Sed quum revixisset Divinâ suâ Virtute, resurrexit tertia die à *Sepulchro*, 10. & post dies XL. sublatus de *Monte Oliveti*, 11. in *Cœlum*, 12. & eo rediens unde venerat, quasi evanuit, *Apostolis*, 13. aspectantibus, quibus misit *Spiritum Sanctum*, 14. de *Cœlo*, decima die post *Ascensum*, ipsos vero, (hac virtute impletos) in Mundum prædicaturos; olim rediturus ad *Judicium extremum*, interea sedens ad *dextram Patris*, & intercedens pro nobis.

Ab hoc *Christo* dicimur *Christiani*, inque eo solo salvamur.

Figure 34: Chapter 147 (Christianity) of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (1887). Public domain.

Comenius then illustrated the knowledge of the Christian view of God in the Chapter ‘Christianity’ (Chapter 147). The picture (see Figure 34) shows that the layout differs from the other pictures in the book. The other pictures each have only one image, while this one has six. The first picture shows a group of people around a newborn baby boy. One can safely deduce that, given the chapter’s title, this scene is intended to represent the birth of Jesus. After some time, this little child was baptised in the river, which is shown in the second picture. In the third picture, this little baby was having dinner with a bunch of adults, and he has grown into an adult. In the fourth picture, the man demonstrated his power in the graveyard, and light shone around him. The man in the fifth panel looks like he's flying into the sky, while the people around him are looking up at him. In the sixth panel, people are excitedly gathering around, paying close attention to what he is saying, hoping to learn something new.

In the next chapter, Comenius explains why one should follow Jesus and what believing in Christianity could provide for people.



Gods Providence. CXLIX. Providentia Dei.

Mens States
are not to be attributed
to *Fortune* or *Chance*,
or the *Influence of the Stars*,
(*Comets*, 1.
indeed are wont to portend no good)
but to the provident
Eye of God, 2.
and to his *governing Hand*,
3. even our *Sights*,
or *Oversights*,
or even our *Faults*.

Humanæ Sortes
non tribuendæ sunt
Fortunæ aut *Casui*,
aut *Influxui Siderum*,
(*Cometæ*, 1.
quidem solent nihil boni portendere)
sed providō
Dei Oculo, 2.
& ejusdem *Manui rectrici*, 3.
etiam nostræ *Prudentiæ*,
vel *Imprudentiæ*,
vel etiam *Noxæ*.

God hath his *Ministers*
and *Angels*, 4.
who accompany a *Man*, 5.
from his birth,
as *Guardians*,
against wicked *Spirits*,
or the *Devil*, 6.
who every minute
layeth wait for him,
to tempt
and vex him.
Wo to the mad
Wizzards and *Witches*
who give themselves to
the *Devil*,
(being inclosed in a *Circle*, 7. calling upon him
with Charms)
they dally with him,
and fall from God!
for they shall receive their
reward with him.

Deus habet *Ministros*
suos, & *Angelos*, 4.
qui associant se *Homini*, 5.
à nativitate ejus,
ut *Custodes*,
contra malignos *Spiritus*,
seu *Diabolum*, 6.
qui minutatim
struit insidias ei,
ad tentandum
vel vexandum.
Væ dementibus
Magis & *Lamiis*
qui Cacodæmoni se
dedunt
(inclusi *Circulo*, 7.
eum advocantes
Incantamentis)
cum eo colludunt
& à Deo deficiunt!
nam cum illo
mercedem accipient.

Figure 35: Chapter 149 (God's Providence) of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (1887). Public domain.

In the Chapter 'God's Providence' (Chapter 149), Comenius seeks to inform readers about God's role in a human's life. From the picture (see Figure 35), a man can be seen standing on the ground, with angelic and devilish figures surrounding him. It seems that the angel tries to guide the man, while the devil-like figure tries to distract him and lure him in the other direction, and another figure encloses itself within a circle, holding a stick. In addition, in the middle of this picture, directly above, the rays of the sun spill onto the earth, and at the centre of the sun, there seems to be an eye that gazes at humans and the world. To further explain the meaning of this picture, Comenius says that it is not luck, chance, or astrological forces that determine a man's good or bad fortune; rather, it is God's merciful eye and sovereign hand, our own caution or carelessness, and our sins.

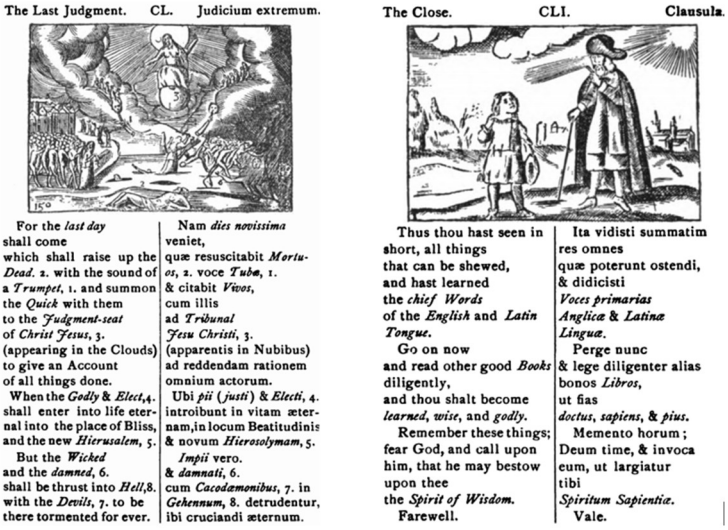


Figure 36: Chapters 150 (The Last Judgment) and 151 (The Close) of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. From The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius (1887). Public domain.

Next, the chapter of 'The Last Judgment' (Chapter 151) presents a scenario in which, above the centre of the picture, God is high in the clouds, radiant in the sky, with angels blowing trumpets from the clouds to the ground (see Figure 36). Below are two distinct groups of people. On the left, a large group of souls gaze reverently at God. On the right, however, a group of people appears to be in great disarray, fleeing in all directions. In the lower part of the picture, people are emerging from their graves in the ground. It seems that Comenius intends to remind people of the results of believing in Christ and to warn of the consequences for those who follow the wicked and the damned.

This book now comes to the final chapter of 'The Close' (Chapter 151). A young man stands next to an old man in a robe and cap in the picture (see Figure 36). The old man is talking and pointing in a certain way, and the young man looks at him with respect and faith. According to the text, the old man gave the young man direct guidance, which may be what Comenius intended for the book's readers. After presenting the world with ample pictures and illustrative descriptions in this book,

Comenius urges his readers to keep learning and to use what they learn to honour God and ultimately gain wisdom.

4.2.3.5.2. What Relation is Intended to be Improved?

In the previous discussion of four relations (Section 4.2.3.1-4.2.3.4), this thesis has explored how *Orbis Pictus* can be used to improve students' relations with the sounds, words, discourse, and essence of things; the discussion now turns to how this knowledge ultimately comes together into a concrete picture of the world for the children. When children are yet to enter or have only just entered a world, that world appears to them as fragmented and devoid of discernible patterns. Although through the discussions in the preceding four relations, pupils have acquired the capacity to grasp the essence of everyday objects and activities, they may still fail to perceive the hierarchies and connections among them. This lack of information about their position within these relations may lead to uncertainty about their self-understanding and sense of responsibility. From this perspective, the relation between pupils and the world is intended to be improved.

4.2.3.5.3. Into What?

Through these sample chapters, Comenius integrates fragmentary things into a world created and sustained by God, characterised by hierarchy and order. In *Orbis Pictus*, God is presented as the transcendent source of all existence; beneath this is the created world of various natural elements, plants, and animals; human beings occupy this world as rational creatures; states and religions govern human life; and the last judgement marks the end of the world. Through the study of this ordered world, students recognise their place in the larger world and their responsibility to maintain its order. In this way, the relation between the student and the ordered world as a whole is improved.

4.2.3.5.4. How is this Relation Improved?

In this relation, this research has selected several chapters from *Orbis Pictus*, including those on God, the World and the Elements, Plants and Animals, Humans, Empires and Religions, to gain a general understanding of Comenius' design intent for the book's structural framework. From the framework established by the sample chapters, it could be inferred that Comenius' intention was not to present merely a series of isolated objects or skills, but a world with a sequence and hierarchy created by God.

First, the Chapter 'God' demonstrates His supremacy as the ultimate source of all things. This chapter hints at Comenius's attempt to inform student readers about God's role and to avoid the devil's captivity. To the students, God is depicted as self-existent, spiritual, omniscient, and omnipresent. By opening the book with the Chapter of God, Comenius reflected his belief that all wisdom and knowledge originate from God. Placing God at the beginning of the book emphasises this ideal, suggesting that people should emulate God's wisdom, patience and guidance. The illustrations of God not only set the foundation of the students' understanding of the divinely ordered world but also set the goal of education as pursuing knowledge and virtue in lifelong time to instate the 'image of God[28]' in Mankind (Hotson, 2000, p. 67). Comenius viewed God's qualities as ideals to be emulated, such as omniscience, justice and omnipresence, and envisioned education as a transformative journey that blended intellectual progress, moral development and practical knowledge. This path

[28] The practice of placing the Chapter of God at the beginning of a book to provide the learners with a religious framework and model for learning is one that can well be traced to Comenius' mentor, Johann Heinrich Alsted, and another theologian, Bartholomäus Keckermann. Both Keckermann's encyclopaedic system and Alsted's own encyclopaedia based on Keckermann's writings dealt with the concept of the primordial perfection of human nature, the 'image of God'(Hotson, 2000, p. 67). They also discuss the means of restoring the divine image in mankind, aiming to serve an ultimate theological goal the instauration of the image of God in Man (Hotson, 2000).

is designed to help students embody God's qualities in their cognition, character and behaviour. As a result, the chapter 'God' serves as both the book's starting point and its guiding principle, deciding how knowledge is given and internalised throughout the story.

Subsequently, chapters such as 'The World', 'Natural Elements', 'Plants', and 'Animals' present the cosmos as a carefully constructed natural order. Every living thing, element, and environment is seen as a separate part of this big picture. These chapters teach pupils about plants, including flowers, herbs, vegetables, cereals, and shrubs. These chapters offer a practical, botanical look at the natural world. They show how people and nature are connected, teach students about the agricultural and botanical knowledge that was important in Comenius's time, and encourage them to appreciate the wide variety of plants.

In these chapters of *Orbis Pictus*, Comenius presents a detailed, structured depiction of the natural world, integrating a wide array of natural elements and creatures that serve multiple educational purposes. Comenius doesn't just introduce students to the visual and descriptive aspects of the world; he also fosters a deep respect and understanding of nature through his methodical presentation of these components. His method demonstrates a combined pedagogical and philosophical comprehension of the natural environment as a fundamental aspect of human existence and education. Comenius uses these chapters to show how different parts of the natural world are connected and how they differ. This helps pupils grasp nature systematically. Comenius created an organised way for children to learn about the complexity of nature by breaking knowledge into groups such as natural elements, plants, and animals. He mixes information with practical use in this way, showing essential abilities from the 17th century, like how to make fire and cultivate.

The benefit of this was that students were prepared not only for the pursuit of knowledge but also for practical survival in their environment. By encouraging

students to recognise and respect nature, he instilled in them a sense of responsibility for the natural world. Comenius' emphasis on observation, interaction, and understanding can be seen as a side note to his desire to promote a balanced relationship between humans and their surroundings.

Thirdly, the chapters on 'Man' presented humans as created in God's image, endowed with senses and a rational soul. Students thus recognise their position as a special creation, superior to animals yet still mortal and bearing responsibilities. This highlights how people are formed in the picture of God all their lives. The Bible says that God formed Eve from one of Adam's ribs. It also describes how Adam and Eve disobeyed God, were punished, and then escaped from the Garden of Eden. It has become a foundation of Christian philosophy because it can elucidate both the basis of sin and the truths of human existence.

Fourthly, the chapter on the Kingdom situates learners within the socio-political hierarchy of human society. Comenius illustrates the structure and organisation of a Kingdom or region. Then, in the next chapter, Comenius illustrated the concept of 'Regal Majesty'. The picture shows the king seated on a throne, wearing a crown. Many soldiers and ministers are standing on the ground and bowing to the king. Furthermore, the following chapters, including 'The Soldier', 'The Camp', 'The Army and the Fight', 'The Sea-Fight' and 'The Besieging of a City', illustrate various aspects of military organisation and political warfare in Comenius' time.

Finally, the chapters on 'Religion', 'Christianity', and the 'Last Judgement' impart a Christian-centric perspective on religion and its concepts to pupils. In particular, the chapter 'The Last Judgement' and the first chapter, 'God', form a cycle that begins with God and ends with God. This may imply that *Orbis Pictus* is not merely an illustrated guide to the world, but rather a work that gradually shapes the world into a form that harmonises with divine wisdom for children (Hughes, 1976). In addition, through the story, readers are familiarised with the life of Jesus Christ, which could

encourage them to follow Jesus and believe in Christianity. The order of these chapters and their interpretation thus present students with a vivid framework for layering the world under Comenius' deliberate design.

In general, these chapters are arranged in the order of God creating the world, human beings living and acting within creation, and, finally, facing the last judgement. This arrangement from Comenius is both temporal, in that it follows the sequence of events from the creation of the world to the Last Judgement, and spatial, in that it describes where people are situated in the world and their final orientation towards God. In this sense, as the learning process progresses, students learn to read and communicate in a new language and, at the same time, can appreciate the implicit order encoded in the material. The fifth relation thus builds on the first four, as the first four relations are concerned with the acquisition of sounds, words, and language, as well as the ability to form sound judgements and action, the fifth relation is the one that reveals the ultimate goal of the structure of the book, namely, that what is learnt is all about the maintenance of the final world order. Through this deliberate chapter sequence, children are guided to locate themselves within this order and become responsible within it.

4.2.3.5.5. Why does this Relation Need to be Improved?

Why did Comenius endeavour to guide his pupils into this orderly world, aspiring for them to learn to speak and act wisely, yet never to uphold the very order of that world? Perhaps some answers could be found in Comenius's life and his educational philosophy. As described in Section 4.1.3.1 of this book, the pressures exerted by the state and religious authorities profoundly shaped his ambitions, actions, and writings due to political and religious persecution, which led him to live in exile from 1628 to 1670. These influences are reflected in all his writings, including his pedagogical works. Comenius' entire career was closely tied to the political-religious sphere. He worked

to repair a divided world, blending philosophy with religion and knowledge with Christian faith. Against the backdrop of religious strife and social upheaval in the seventeenth century, students needed to learn not only the names of things and the structure of the world, but also to master the proper use of the senses, to develop sound judgement, and to act in accordance with the divine and social order. Thus, improving the relationship between object cognition and wise conduct became central to his Pan-Sophia project.

From this perspective, for Comenius, education's ultimate goal lay not merely in expanding children's knowledge reserves. Rather, it places the learner within a temporal and eschatological order that begins with God's creation and culminates in the Last Judgement. Education therefore could be assumed to prepare each person to recognise the world as God's ordered creation, to live responsibly within that order, and ultimately to orient human life back towards God. According to Comenius, the highest level of this world is where the eternal God lives. Below that is the created space made up of different natural elements, plants, and animals. As reasoning beings made in God's image, people have a special and important place in this space. Yet this does not mean that education is concerned only with the final judgement. It also promises a well-ordered and blessed life in the present, in which knowledge, conduct, and faith are brought into harmony. Within this world, Comenius, as an educator, could be assumed to make endeavours to guide students to see all things truly, to speak and act wisely, so that ultimately, they may learn from God, and to maintain the world and order created by God.

In summary, *Orbis Pictus* depicted a divinely created, hierarchically ordered world to the students through organised, sequenced chapters. That is to say, Relation 5 improves the relation between students and the order of the world. In this way, *Orbis Pictus* introduces young learners to a world governed by divine order.

4.3. Conclusion

Drawing on the method of hermeneutics and the 5W1H analytical framework, this chapter provides a detailed analysis of the first textbook, *Orbis Pictus*. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the focus is not on analysing *Orbis Pictus* as an early illustrated textbook or as bilingual vocabulary instruction, but rather on exploring the educational intentions embedded in it.

In the analysis of *Orbis Pictus*, this chapter first examines the historical and cultural context in which the book was composed and used (Chapter 4.1), including the development of key educational institutions, the author's identity, and the philosophical ideas that underpin the book's design. Subsequently, a detailed pedagogical interpretation of the book's educational intentions is provided in accordance with the 5W1H question framework's sequence (Chapter 4.2). Specifically, among numerous possible educational intentions, this doctoral thesis selects five relations between students and something or someone, including relations with language, behaviour, and the world order, with the aim of exploring key educational elements between educators and learners in *Orbis Pictus*.

Of these five relations, the first three focus on revealing the book's role in educating language skills. In the first relation, Comenius does not begin with abstract grammatical rules, but rather with the Chapter 'Lively and Vocal Alphabet', which presents students with the calls of familiar animals, visual images, and alphabetical letters. Through this arrangement, children are guided to learn to read and write unfamiliar letters and phonetic systems, drawing upon their existing experiences of what they have seen and heard. Subsequently, the second relation extends this connection between experience and language from sounds to words. Through numbered notes and textual descriptions (as demonstrated in chapters such as 'Corn' and 'Flowers'), children learn to recognise, distinguish and name the mass objects of

the world. In this context, naming is not merely the accumulation of vocabulary, but a means of capturing the essence of the world's phenomena. The third relation, meanwhile, illustrates the further development from isolated vocabulary to meaningful speech. In chapters such as 'Bread-baking, 'Shoemaker' and 'Society between Man and Wife', learners are no longer merely required to identify individual objects, but are guided to understand processes, roles, actions and relationships. Within this framework, students not only learn to use words, but also to employ language coherently and logically in daily life to make meaningful descriptions and characterisations.

The fourth relation builds upon the refinement of the first three. Here, the educator seeks to guide the learner towards precise conduct following the acquisition of precise linguistic ability. In other words, through the analysis of exemplary chapters on 'The Outward and Inward Senses', 'The Soul of Man', 'Moral Philosophy' and the eight Virtues, it can be seen that Comenius endeavoured to link understanding with judgement and action. As evidenced by Comenius's chapters on the soul of the man and virtues, children are taught that human perception must be regulated by reason, and that knowledge should lead to behaviour characterised by prudence, diligence, temperance, fortitude, patience, humanity, justice and liberty. In this sense, *Orbis Pictus* exhibits a clear preference for knowledge that prepares the way for wise action.

The fifth relation places pupils within a broader framework than the previous ones: the world itself. The sample chapters show Comenius extending from 'God' to the created world, from nature to humanity, and from social and political institutions to religion, 'Christianity', divine providence and the 'Last Judgement'. This structure indicates that the world presented to children is an ordered, hierarchically structured one, rooted in theology. Consequently, children are not merely learning to correctly understand the syllables, vocabulary and sentence structures of language, nor merely

learning proper behaviour; they are being introduced to a comprehensive worldview in which everything has its rightful place.

Through these five relations, Comenius, as a representative of the older generation, intends to guide children to a world that is perceivable, nameable, and orderly. By utilising *Orbis Pictus*, educators not only improve students' relations and their ability to read and write in language but also strengthen the relation between children and their own behaviour and their position in the ordered world. Regarding answering the research question 1.1 of this thesis, Chapter 4 demonstrates that *Orbis Pictus* constructs an educational world that guides learners to observe, name, discuss, judge and act within the order of creation. In this way, young learners are introduced, step by step, to a world that can be perceived, named, and communicated about, in which actions are guided by reason whilst adhering to a sacred order. Chapter 5 turns to the same questions for *The Three Character Classic*.

These five improvable relations are integrated into a coherent pedagogical world alongside this thesis's analysis of *Orbis Pictus* in Chapter 4, which provides a foundational framework for the subsequent analysis of *The Three Character Classic* in Chapter 5 and prepares a comparative framework for the comparative work in Chapter 6. Now the discussion turns to Chapter 5, the interpretation of *The Three Character Classic*.

5. Interpretation of *The Three Character Classic*

After analysing the pedagogical elements of the book *Orbis Pictus* in Chapter 4, the discussion now moves to the other book, *The Three Character Classic,* at this point specifically focusing on RQ 1.1: What pedagogical elements does each text construct, and what intentions do these reflect within their respective educational traditions? Through this structured approach, this chapter aims to provide a relatively comprehensive and thorough understanding of the pedagogical intentions of the authors as implied in *The Three Character Classic,* thereby laying the groundwork for the comparative analysis of the two books in Chapter 6.

Specifically, Chapter 5 of this thesis covers two parts of the book's interpretation. The first part provides the contextual background (answers to the questions 'when' and 'where') of *The Three Character Classic*, introduced in Section 5.1, focusing on ancient Chinese pedagogy that prepared students for the Imperial Examination. The development of different pedagogical approaches is examined to explore where *The Three Character Classic* could be used as a textbook. In addition, the classroom settings in different pedagogical institutions where the book could be used are described, followed by a discussion of the author's background and Confucian philosophy.

The second part, Section 5.2, discusses the book's pedagogical elements using the 5W1H questions. In discussing each relation, I have selected several sample verses from the book as references for analysis. Based on these sample verses, the questions of 'what' relation is improved, expected to develop 'into what' relation, 'how' this

relation is improved, and 'why' this relation needs to be improved will be discussed accordingly. The following section introduces the when-and-where elements, or the contextual background, of *The Three Character Classic*.

5.1. Contextual Backgrounds of *The Three Character Classic*

In this section, the historical and cultural background of *The Three Character Classic*, the flourishing of the imperial examinations, the development of educational institutions, and the principal academic thought of the time will be examined in detail. It must be acknowledged that, purely on the basis of time and cultural background, speculating about the factors that have influenced the book is limited. For example, there is no direct evidence that a particular school of thought influenced the author in writing this book. Key terms selected from the text can only be used to identify the possible schools of thought that commonly employ these terms and ideas, trace their possible conceptual backgrounds within those academic traditions, and thereby return to the book to interpret the educational intentions implied in the text with care.

When examining the author's educational background and other works, it must also be borne in mind that the author's understanding of education, ethics and the world may have evolved over the course of their life and writing. Therefore, in view of the above considerations, the brief historical and cultural development, schools of thought and the background of the author discussed here are not intended to be comprehensive attempts at trying to define the culture of thought represented and upheld in this book but rather to try to reveal the cultural and historical context of the time within the scope of this thesis and to provide a basis for inferring the pedagogical voice of the text in my interpretations. Now the discussion turns to the first part: the historical and cultural development of the time.

5.1.1. Historical and Cultural Development

Before analysing the book's main body, it is necessary to understand its historical and cultural background. *The Three Character Classic*, as an educational tool, was inevitably shaped by the social, political, and educational systems of its time, in both its content and structure, and an understanding of this background helps explain its educational intentions and students' needs. This section traces the intellectual and institutional currents that fed into the book; the development of the educational institutions themselves is examined separately in Section 5.1.2.

Although *The Three Character Classic* is generally held to have been compiled during the Song and Yuan dynasties (Wu, 2015), its educational philosophy was shaped over centuries of intellectual change. The development of ancient Chinese education is conventionally traced to the Western Zhou[29] (1046–771 BCE), when learning was bound to the state, and only officials could serve as teachers (Sun, 1992); the institutional form of this arrangement is discussed in Section 5.1.2.1.

The decisive intellectual opening came in the Spring and Autumn (770–476 BCE) and Warring States (475–221 BCE) periods[30]. Under shifting economic and political conditions, this became the era of the 'hundred schools of thought', among them four principal philosophical and educational traditions: the Confucian, Mohist, Daoist, and Legalist schools (Sun, 1992). The intellectual pluralism of this period did not last. Under Emperor Wu of the Han (r. 141–87 BCE), Confucianism was established as state

[29] The Western Zhou (c. 1046–771 BCE) was the first phase of the Zhou dynasty, ruling from its capital near present-day Xi'an until invasions forced the court eastward to Luoyang. It is conventionally associated with the consolidation of ritual and kinship order later idealised in the Confucian tradition.

[30] The Spring and Autumn (770–476 BCE) and Warring States (475–221 BCE) periods comprise the Eastern Zhou, an era of waning royal authority, inter-state warfare, and intense intellectual ferment.

orthodoxy, relegating other schools to the sidelines, making Confucian thought the dominant framework for political and ethical education across the empire (Wang, 2025). From the Han onwards, Confucianism became the central tradition of Chinese education.

Intellectual life reached a high point during the reign of the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE). Zhu Xi (1130–1200 CE), a leading figure of Southern Song Neo-Confucianism, held that learning should form upright habits, dispose pupils to treat people and things with decency, and proceed through normative instruction (Sun, 1992). He observed that the ancients, in first teaching children, used short, rhyming phrases (Zhu, n.d.), which was a method well suited to children's learning habits (Zhao, 2011) and one embodied in *The Three Character Classic* itself.

It was against this background that elementary education, or Mengxue (蒙学, roughly equivalent to kindergarten and primary schooling), took its characteristic form. Its primary aims were to cultivate children's reading and writing, instil basic moral and ethical norms, foster a shared sense of Chinese culture, and develop good daily habits. Mengxue textbooks, such as *The Three Character Classic*, emphasised moral, historical, and poetic instruction, among other subjects. The most fundamental and widely circulated of these literacy primers were the so-called 'Three, Hundred, and Thousand' texts: *The Three Character Classic*, *The Hundred Family Surnames*, and *The Thousand Character Classic* (Zheng, 2017).

Alongside these developments, the imperial examinations grew steadily in importance, and their influence on *The Three Character Classic* warrants separate consideration. The book explicitly outlines the career path to obtaining office. In Verses 84 and 85, at the end of the text, the author writes, 'in one's youth one must study; in adulthood one must put into practice what one has learnt; one may then assist one's sovereign above and benefit the common people below, earning a good name, bringing honour to one's parents, casting glory upon one's forebears, and

bestowing blessings upon one's descendants' (幼而学，壮而行。 上致君，下泽民。 扬名声，显父母。 光于前，裕于后) (Three Character Classic, n.d.). The passage makes clear that the purpose of diligent study is not merely personal success but service to the political and social order when they obtain an official position, and at that time, the principal route to office was the imperial examination.

As *the Analects (论语)* observes, those who excel in office should extend their learning, and those who excel in learning should take office, capturing the close bond between study, ability, and official careers in ancient China (Kongzi, n.d.). That bond was institutionalised in the examination system, which, from its beginnings under the Han (Cheng & Curtis, 2010), became by the mid-Tang the principal route to a government post and remained so until its abolition in 1905 (Sutterby, 2012). Two features of the system bear directly on *The Three Character Classic*. First, because advancement ran almost entirely through the examinations, the study itself was oriented towards office-holding—precisely the trajectory the primer urges in Verses 84 and 85. Second, because the examinations took the Confucian classics as their core content (Wang, 2012), the canon they privileged shaped what an elementary primer needed to instil. The examinations thus formed an important context for both the content and the organisation of the book: the text prepares the child, from the outset, for a world in which Confucian learning and social advancement were one and the same path[31].

In summary, by the time *The Three Character Classic* came into wide circulation in the Song, it rested on over a thousand years of evolution: in institutions, from purely

[31] The system's later rigidities lie outside the scope of this discussion. By the Ming and Qing, the narrowing of subject matter to a few classics and the formal constraints of the eight-legged essay (八股文) were widely held to have stifled intellectual innovation, a tension that, alongside the pressures of modernisation, contributed to the system's abolition in 1905 (Wang, 2012; Xu & Lou, 1990).

state-run schooling towards a combination of state and private provision (Section 5.1.2); in textbooks, from simple primers for learning to read towards morally oriented teaching materials; and in thought, from a society that prized diverse philosophical traditions to one dominated by a Confucian-led examination culture, in which preparation for the imperial examinations had become the dominant purpose of learning. With this general picture of the period in place, the discussion now turns to the educational institutions in which the book was used.

5.1.2. Development of Main Pedagogical Institutions

Building on the intellectual and historical developments traced in Section 5.1.1, this section examines the two principal types of educational institution in imperial China, government schools and private schools, and the shifting balance between them to locate where *The Three Character Classic* was used.

5.1.2.1. Government Schools

Government schools (官学, guānxué) were among the most influential institutional forms of education in imperial China, hosted and governed directly by the state (Li, 2014). Their origins lay in the Western Zhou arrangement summarised as 'learning resides in the official government' (学在官府 xué zài guānfǔ): education was not a separate enterprise but a function of the state, and only officials could serve as teachers (Sun, 1992, p. 55). At this stage, schooling was organised into *state education* (国学, Guoxue), which provided higher and elementary instruction in the royal capital for the sons of kings, nobles, and high officials; and *local education* (乡学, Xiangxue), which offered elementary instruction in the regions to lower aristocrats and a few selected commoners; some children of noble families were also taught at home (Sun, 1992). The curriculum centred on the Six Arts, including Rites, Music, Archery,

Charioteering, Calligraphy, and Mathematics, and was designed to prepare men for governance (Xu, 2025).

Under the Han, central government schools were established at the prefectural level in accordance with administrative divisions, with the purpose of cultivating talent for the court; access to such institutions (county, prefectural, and the national university) was confined to particular social strata. Although official schooling declined as private provision spread (see Section 5.1.2.2), it revived under the Sui and Tang, when the rise of the examination system gave the state renewed reason to maintain schools that prepared candidates in the Confucian canon. Government schools, however, were oriented chiefly towards this canon and examination preparation; the elementary primers, such as *The Three Character Classic*, belonged primarily to the world of private and family schooling, to which the discussion now turns.

5.1.2.2. Private School

Private schools (私学, sīxué), defined by contrast with the *Government schools*, first emerged in the Spring and Autumn period. As intellectual pluralism flourished, teaching detached itself from the state: it became an autonomous profession, and the student body broadened from the children of officials to the general population (Xiong, 1996). From the Han onwards, private schools outnumbered state schools and became the mainstream form of education, especially in the late Eastern Han (25–220 CE). Through the periods of division and into the Sui and Tang, private provision continued to expand even as official schooling waned, carrying forward not only Confucian but also Buddhist and Daoist learning (Xiong, 1996). It was typically a privately run undertaking in which individuals or families engaged a teacher for their children, and its content was largely shaped by the examination curriculum, that is, the Confucian classics.

From an institutional standpoint, private schools may be divided into two representative types: *the Sishu* (私塾, village or kinship schools) and *the Shuyuan* (书院, academies) (Li, 2014).

The *Sishu* was the principal site of *Mengxue*, providing elementary education to children of ordinary families within the household, clan, or village; it is among the most representative forms of private schooling and the one in which *The Three Character Classic* was chiefly used. Admission was informal: a pupil generally needed only the schoolteacher's consent, after which he would stand before the memorial tablet of Kongzi and bow to both Kongzi and the teacher. The Sishu was little regulated by the state, which regarded the education of young children as the responsibility of parents, and thus it flourished among the general population for a very long time. Under the Song and Ming, Neo-Confucianism, led by Zhu Xi, placed particular emphasis on the ethical education of children, and texts such as *the Four Books (四书), The Great Learning (大学), The Doctrine of the Mean (中庸), The Analects (论语), and Mengzi (孟子;* the last also named in *The Three Character Classic*) became increasingly central to elementary learning and examination preparation (Li, 2014).

The *Shuyuan*, by contrast, took Confucianism as its core but addressed an older and more advanced body of students and scholars (Guo, 2013). Originating in the Tang as a place for literati to collect books rather than to teach (Yuan, 1982), it gradually became a teaching institution as the Song promoted the examinations and favoured 'literature over martial affairs' (Guo, 2013). In the Southern Song, Zhu Xi made the *Shuyuan* a centre for the propagation of Confucianism, identifying its three functions as lecturing, transmitting Confucian learning, and collecting books (Guo, 2013); by the Qing Dynasty, it had become the most widespread educational institution of all. Since *The Three Character Classic* was an elementary primer, it belonged primarily to the *Sishu* rather than the Shuyuan, a distinction that bears on how the book was taught.

With these two institutional types in view, the discussion now turns to the classroom setting in which the book was used.

5.1.2.3. Classroom Setting



Figure 37: A traditional Chinese classroom scene (illustrative). Retrieved from https://learnodo-newtonic.com/confucius-facts. This image is included for illustrative purposes only, to convey the general setting of teacher–student interaction in traditional Chinese education.

Because it is not easy to find literature that accurately depicts the classrooms where *The Three Character Classic* was used, this thesis seeks an image that roughly depicts the Confucian academy of that period for reference (see Figure 37). According to the figure shown above, this image from a traditional Chinese painting depicts a teaching scene, possibly a schoolhouse from the Song Dynasty or earlier, depicting a gathering of scholars or intellectuals. In the centre of the right side of the picture sits a highly respected scholar, dressed in a costume similar to that of Kongzi and other Confucian scholars. In this scene, the scholar is seated at his desk, speaking to his disciple, who is saluting him with folded hands. Behind the disciple, nearly a dozen disciples are lined up waiting to ask the scholar for advice. Behind the scholar are disciples reading, and to his left, several disciples sit in a circle, seemingly engaged in a dialogue or

exchange of views. The calligraphic inscription on the left side of the picture is difficult to discern due to image blurring, but it may be a record of Kongzi's teachings on Confucianism, philosophy, ethics, and statecraft or a description of the picture's context (e.g., place and time).

This scene depicts a typical Confucian teaching setting, in which a teacher faces a large group of students, likely of varying ages, gathered in a single classroom, requiring the teacher to provide tailored, individualised guidance. In this setting, teachers are held in high regard, and the pupils treat them with great respect. This provides a general visual impression of what a classroom might have looked like when *The Three Character Classic* was used for teaching. The next section explores the educational philosophy embedded in this book, beginning with a review of the author's educational background.

5.1.3. Educational Philosophy in *The Three Character Classic*

5.1.3.1. Authorship, Transmission, and Confucian Inheritance

Understanding the pedagogical ideas and intentions embedded in the text, and exploring the author's educational experience, can provide valuable insights; however, identifying the author of *The Three Character Classic* is not straightforward. As previously stated, *The Three Character Classic* initially gained public attention during the Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE). There are few records of it afterwards during the Yuan and early Ming dynasties (1271-1644 CE), and it appears to have attracted renewed attention in the middle of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE).

During this period, there was much debate regarding the authorship of this book within the field of education, but there is still no consensus. There are two main versions about the author of *The Three Character Classic* and its writing period with the first view, represented by 屈大均 Qu Dajun (1630 – 1696 CE), arguing that *The Three Character Classic* was written by 区适子 Ou Shizi, a non-official scholar in the late Song Dynasty (Qu, 1985). By contrast, a more widely accepted view, such as 王相 Wang Xiang (1789-1852 CE), tend to agree with the other version of authorship, which is that Wang Yinglin (王应麟, 1223-1296 CE), who was an official and scholar of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279 CE), wrote *The Three Character Classic* to teach the offspring of his family (Li, 2004). When Wang Yinglin was educating his own children to read in his later years, he wrote a three-character song that integrates a collection of classics and history, which is said to be the '*Three Character Classic*'. According to Li (2004), the main judgement is that Wang Yinglin's academic origins lie in Zhu Xi and that he conducted an in-depth study of Confucian and neo-Confucian works. At the same time, he attached great importance to the study of elementary education and authored notable books, including 小学绀珠 *(Xiaoxue ganzhu), 姓氏急就篇 (Xingshi jijiupian), and 蒙学要览 (Mengxue yaolan)*. On this basis, many scholars have agreed that Wang Yinglin possessed the ability to write a comprehensive textbook such as *The Three Character Classic* (Li, 2004).

As time went on, people from all dynasties continued to supplement *The Three Character Classic* to reflect the changes during the times. So far, there have been many editions, such as the 1068-character version of the Song and early Yuan dynasties, the 1092-character version of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE), the 1122-character version of the late Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE), the 1140-character text, and the 1170-character text of the early Qing dynasty. Thus, it can be stated that *The Three Character Classic* was supplemented and has evolved through time, so the

author's name and the time period in which it was initially written are unlikely to be determined as a result.

Although the lack of direct evidence makes it impossible to identify the author with certainty or to reconstruct the process of composition from his educational experience, Confucian thought recurs throughout the debate on authorship, and examination of the text itself reveals further evidence of this Confucian inheritance. Three features are telling. First, the opening verses, 'at birth, human nature is inherently good' (人之初，性本善) and 'if not taught, that nature will shift' (苟不教，性乃迁), frame the whole primer around a claim about human nature, a claim whose philosophical grounding is examined in Section 5.1.3.2. Second, Verse 18 (曰仁义，礼智信。 此五常，不容紊) invokes the Five Constant Virtues, a core category of Confucian and Neo-Confucian ethics. Third, the recommended reading list in Verses 48–61 opens with the Four Books (四书) and the Five Classics (五经), followed by the Zhouyi (周易), Zhouli (周礼), and Liji (礼记), a canon drawn overwhelmingly from the Confucian tradition (Three Character Classic, n.d.).

Taken together, the text's structure, its moral vocabulary, and its reading list all point to a deep debt to Confucian and Neo-Confucian educational thought. It is therefore reasonable to take Confucian thought, as exemplified by Mengzi, and the Neo-Confucian synthesis, represented by Zhu Xi, as the primary intellectual background for interpreting *The Three Character Classic* (a background examined in detail in the section that follows). The next section introduces Confucian thought, not as a general history of Chinese philosophy but as the educational context within which *The Three Character Classic* became meaningful as an elementary primer.

5.1.3.2. Confucian Thought as the Educational Context of *The Three Character Classic*

The development of pedagogy is inseparable from that of the Confucian tradition itself. As outlined in Section 5.1.1, the dissolution of the state's educational monopoly during the Spring and Autumn period opened teaching to private masters, and it was within this newly independent space that Kongzi began taking disciples and transmitting his teachings. In the pre-Qin period, however, Kongzi was only one master among many, and his thought did not become an instrument of statecraft until the Han. As the social order shifted, Emperor Wu of Han adopted a policy that dismissed the hundred schools and honoured Kongzi's teaching alone (Wang, 2025). From the Han onward, Confucian thought became the mainstream of political and ethical education across the country; from elementary instruction to the university, and from official to private schools, the Chinese pedagogical system remained committed to transmitting it, taking the Confucian classics as its content for centuries thereafter.

Kongzi lived in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. He wrote nothing himself, but after his death, his disciples recorded his teachings, and over time these were assembled into a book called 论语, the Analects. This work became the core text of the Confucian tradition—the dominant cultural force throughout much of Chinese history, and influential in other East Asian countries such as Korea and Japan. Besides Kongzi, two later thinkers who significantly developed the Confucian tradition during the Warring States period were (孟子) Mengzi (372–289 BCE) and (荀子) Xunzi (316–235 BCE). Although Mengzi was a greater influence on the tradition than Xunzi, both men—represented by the books that bear their names—marked important philosophical developments of Kongzi's thought. Kongzi, Mengzi, and Xunzi together formed the core of early Confucianism, but later generations (especially in Song and Ming

philosophy) regarded Kongzi and Mengzi as the mainstream, while Xunzi was marginalised due to his ideological differences.

It is not uncommon for a thinker to open an argument about education with a discussion of human nature, and the two share contrasting views on this point. Xunzi argues that human nature is bad because people are driven by diverse self-interests and desires, and holds that education aims to keep this tendency within reasonable bounds (Xunzi, 1988). Mengzi, by contrast, claims that people are born good-natured, while acknowledging that this nature may be lost through external influence (Behuniak, 2004). On this basis, Verse 1 of *The Three Character Classic* follows Mengzi: human beings are born with an excellent and similar nature, and come to differ only as they grow, through differences of upbringing and education.

The discussion now returns to the intellectual developments of the period. Beginning in the thirteenth century, the Mongol regime launched an invasion of the south, and the Yuan's conquest of the Southern Song lasted for decades. The Southern Song, a culturally prosperous dynasty, was not only conquered militarily but also underwent drastic changes to its political and social structure, alongside significant cultural developments, including that of 理 Li. During the Northern Song, Confucian scholars such as Cheng Yi (程颐) and (程颢) Cheng Hao absorbed Buddhist and Daoist ideas and introduced concepts such as (理) Li, Qi (气), and 心 Heart to reconstruct the Confucian theoretical system. In the Southern Song, Zhu Xi integrated the two Chengs' ideas with those of 周敦颐 Zhou Dunyi and 张载 Zhang Zai and constructed a theory of 理 Li and 气 Qi as the pursuit of knowledge through the investigation of things, and the doctrine of preserving heavenly principle and extinguishing human desire (Tang, 2000). Zhu Xi listed *Mengzi* among *the Four Books*, thereby strengthening Mengzi's position in Confucianism; because Xunzi advocated the view that human nature is born bad, which conflicted with his own, Zhu Xi criticised it as 'not pure'. From then

on, Zhu Xi's ideas became the official school of thought during the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties (Tang, 2000).

Accordingly, in the Song Dynasty (the heyday of Confucianism), Zhu Xi's theory of Li influenced the imperial examination system and its teaching materials, as well as the education of children by village teachers and parents (Tang, 2000). *The Three Character Classic*, regarded as one of the essential textbooks in Confucian schools during this period, can be read as reflecting this broader Confucian and Neo-Confucian educational context. For example, the 'Three Principles and Five Constants' mentioned in the text are Zhu Xi's way of converting the core concept of his rationale, Li, into ethics that could be heard and disseminated among the people (Tang, 2000). He held that in the universe there exists only one Li, which unfolds into the three principles (the norms governing ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife) and the five constants (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faith), all of which are but movements of this single Li, which exists wherever it reaches. Dao is Li: it is called Dao insofar as people follow it together, and Li insofar as it possesses a specific normative order. Its content does not exceed the human relationships of ruler and subject, father and son, brothers, husband and wife, and friends, but these are essentially one and the same (Tang, 2000). Neo-Confucianism thus gave moral relations in ruler–subject, father–son, husband–wife, elder–younger, and friend–friend a cosmological and ethical grounding through the concept of Li. For Zhu Xi, Li was the ethical principle of daily life, governing how things and interpersonal relationships are handled across the full range of human activity. The abstract idea of Li was, in this way, combined with the reality of history (Tang, 2000). As noted in Section 5.1.3.1, *The Three Character Classic* contains not only a large number of Confucian classics but also exemplary role models and rules of daily conduct suited to the norms of children's learning and life, making it one of the representative readings of the Confucian school, widely used in elementary learning, family instruction, and private schooling.

In the early Yuan Dynasty, the imperial examinations were suspended for nearly eighty years (from 1234 to 1313 CE) (Yuan shi, n.d.). As a result, the southerners—former inhabitants of the Southern Song—were placed in the lowest stratum among scholars and lost their traditional path to advancement. Most turned to lecturing in academies or private schools among the general population, and more scholars and gentry passed on their culture through clan schools, drawing their teaching materials largely from texts such as *The Three Character Classic (三字经)* and *The Thousand Character Essay (千字文)*, which preserved Confucian ethics in folk settings (Yuan shi, n.d.). When Yuan Renzong subsequently restored the examinations, he established Zhu Xi's *Collected Commentaries on the Four Books (四书章句集注)* as the examination standard, and Neo-Confucian learning, centred on Zhu Xi's interpretation of Li, was elevated from folk scholarship to national ideology (Yuan shi, n.d.). This second moment matters as much as the first: it was the restoration and the canonisation of Zhu Xi's commentaries that locked the Neo-Confucian reading of the classics into the system within which a primer like *The Three Character Classic* did its work.

As a Confucian primer, *The Three Character Classic* embodies this tradition, transforming classical scholarship and moral precepts into a concise and memorable form suitable for children. In this sense, it can be regarded as a representative text of Confucian elementary education. Its three-character rhyming verse makes it easy to memorise, yet the content to be memorised has long been shaped by Confucian concepts concerning human nature, moral cultivation, family relationships, the study of the classics, and social order. Consequently, the text not only teaches children to read and write but also guides them into the world of Confucian morality and culture. This background is crucial to the pedagogical analysis that follows, as it helps to explain why the book's content gradually extends from basic literacy to moral exemplars, codes of conduct, historical memory, and social responsibility.

The next sections turn to the second part of this chapter, examining the book's pedagogical aspects with the 5W1H question analytical framework. Here, I begin with the first question: the role of the educator in *The Three Character Classic.*

5.2. Pedagogical Analysis Using the 5W1H Framework

Having introduced the historical, institutional, and philosophical background of *The Three Character Classic*, which serves as the hermeneutic framework for interpreting its pedagogical meanings, the following sections focus on the text's pedagogical elements, analysing it through the lens of the 5W1H framework.

Specifically, Section 5.2.1 explores the role of the educator in the context of *The Three Character Classic*, positioned at the top of the pedagogical triangle. Section 5.2.2 analyses the role of the student to be educated by *The Three Character Classic*. In Section 5.2.3, a detailed analysis of the five improvable relations in *The Three Character Classic* (What) is conducted. As introduced in Chapter 2, the five improvable relations are the relations between students and sound, words, discourse, action, and world order. In Section 5.2.3, from Section 5.2.3.1 to 5.2.3.5, each of these improvable relations is discussed in the following order: what relation is expected to improve (What), expected outcome of this improvement (into What), in what way (how), and an assumption of the broader goal or purpose of using this book (Why). The discussion now turns to the educator's role in *The Three Character Classic.*

5.2.1. Who: The Role of the Educator in *The Three Character Classic*

Before beginning to explore the role of the educator in *The Three Character Classic*, it is necessary to clarify to whom this term may refer within the text's educational context. As discussed in Chapter 3, the educator in this thesis is not understood as one fixed individual, but as a pedagogical role or voice constructed through the text and enacted in educational practice. This distinction is particularly important in the case of *The Three Character Classic*, since its authorship remains uncertain and especially the text was transmitted, supplemented, and used across different historical periods. However, the historical works below could help to sketch a general image of the people who taught this textbook to children and young people at the time.

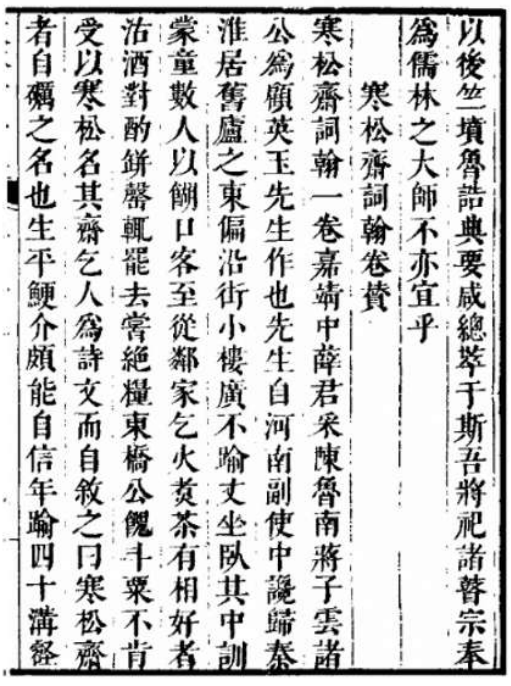

以後竺墳魯詰典要咸總萃于斯吾將祀諸瞽宗奉
爲儒林之大師不亦宜乎
寒松齋詞翰卷贊
寒松齋詞翰一卷嘉靖中薛君采陳魯南蔣子雲諸
公爲顧英玉先生作也先生自河南副使中謫歸泰
淮居舊廬之東偏沿街小樓廣不踰丈坐臥其中訓
蒙童數人以餬口客至從鄰家乞火煑茶有相好者
沽酒對酌餅罄甕罷去嘗絕糧東橋公餽斗粟不肯
受以寒松名其齋乞人爲詩文而自敘之曰寒松齋
者自嬾之名也生平鯁介頗能自信年踰四十溝壑

Figure 38: A passage from Muzhai youxue ji [牧斋有学集] by Qian Qianyi, depicting the figure of a teacher/scholar of the period. From 识典古籍 [Shidian Guji]. Public domain.

An excerpt (see Figure 38) from the ancient book on the right, 牧原集 (*Muyuan ji)*, records that a scholar who had been a vice-governor in Henan Province was forced to return to his hometown of Qinhuai after losing his official position due to false accusations. He resided in a side room on the east side of his old house, next to a small structure facing the street. His room was less than three metres wide. Every day, he lived and ate in this little room while teaching many youngsters to read and write to make a living (Qian, Q., n.d.).

In addition, according to *Compilation of the Song Court Records: Cultivating Confucianism II* (宋会要辑稿·崇儒二), the number of primary school pupils was now approaching 1,000, and enrolment continued to increase (Xu, S., n.d.). At the time, there were only ten 贡士 Gongshi (junior official position) teachers, and it was now planned to divide the students into ten grades. Later, in accordance with the court's instructions, since the primary school cancelled the three-house system, there was naturally no need to appoint lecturers, examination and selection officers, direct study officers, and medical officers. According to the law at that moment, there should not be any additional positions. However, the plan to divide meant they now requested the establishment of two advanced level students to act as instructors.

On the 30th day of the 5th month of the 2nd year of *Duan Gong (989)*, Kangzhou submitted a petition requesting the issuance of the books of 九经 (*the Nine Classics)* to teach the people of this state who were seeking education. The court approved the request. In November of the third year of Jingde (1006), Pinggui, a bachelor of Dingzhou who was well versed in *the Spring and Autumn Annals*, was appointed as an assistant professor at the prefecture's school, in charge of day-to-day teaching affairs. At the same time, he instructed the transfer department and local governors to recommend candidates for professorships from among their subordinates and state and county officials, with a term of office of three years. If there were existing local literary officials who could be dispatched, they were required to be elected by the local councillors who had the moral and academic ability to take up the post.

Based on the above information, it can therefore be inferred that teachers were initially mostly Confucian scholars, especially notable in government-run schools. In addition, current or former officials were often selected to take up teaching positions in various places, and some senior students were seconded to take up teaching positions in the lower grades. There is no unique management or assessment structure in place for teachers during this time period. Teachers employed by royal or

elite families were mostly talented individuals at all levels selected through the imperial examinations, while teachers in the private sector, such as private schools, academies, and other educational institutions, were mostly scholars who had failed the imperial examinations but had a good knowledge of the classics and history. In their later years, they opened private schools in their hometowns to educate their youngsters. In general, those involved in teaching *The Three Character Classic* may include family members, scholars, or older pupils who have temporarily taken on teaching duties, mostly shaped by the Confucian classics and, directly or indirectly, by the examination culture of the time.

From this perspective, the educator in *The Three Character Classic* can be understood on at least three levels. First, the educator is represented by adult figures who used the text in practice, including teachers, family elders, and private tutors who guided children through recitation, explanation, and correction. Second, the textual pedagogical voice of the text itself, which presents knowledge and instruction in a concise, rhythmic form, also acts as the role of educator teaching the students. Third, there is the wider Confucian tradition, which gives authority to the text by defining what counts as proper learning, moral conduct, family order, and social responsibility. Taken together, the educator in *The Three Character Classic* is therefore not simply an individual author or classroom teacher. Rather, it is a layered pedagogical role formed by the text, enacted by teachers and elders, and authorised by the Confucian educational tradition.

Now that a basic understanding of educators' roles at that time has been established, the discussion turns to students' position in society.

5.2.2. Whom: The Role of the Educand in *The Three Character Classic*

Having examined the roles educators could play in the educational context with *The Three Character Classic*, it is now necessary to explore who exactly the learners or readers of this text were. *The Three Character Classic* itself alone cannot fully answer this question, as it was used across various educational settings, including home education, private schools, public schools and so on. Therefore, this section cites several historical works that mention the use of *The Three Character Classic* to infer likely characteristics of its learners (such as age, social background, and gender), with the aim of providing a general image of the audience for which this book was intended.

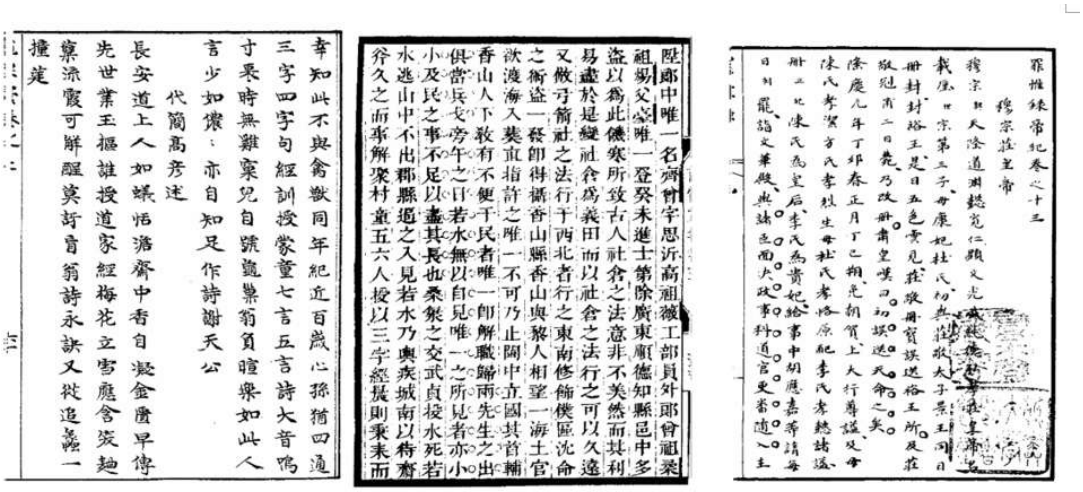


Figure 39: Pages from (a) Guichao gao [龟巢稿], (b) Nanlei ji [南雷集], and (c) Zuiweilu [罪惟录]. From 识典古籍 [Shidian Guji]. Public domain.

The three excerpts above (see Figure 39) can be examined in turn. According to *the Nest of Turtle's Manuscript (龟巢稿 Guichao gao)*, Classical readings consisting of three- and four-word phrases are used to teach children at the initiation stage (Xie, Y., n.d.); a rural educational scene is described in *the Nanlei Collection (南雷集 Nanlei ji)* which says there are five or six children in the village, studying *The Three Character*

Classic (Huang, Z., n.d.); an incident of counselling on education in the courtroom is described in *the Record of Guilt (罪惟录)*, in which a cabinet minister kowtows and salutes to the Emperor's son, imploring His Highness to concentrate on his studies. The emperor responded, 'I am reading *The Three Character Classic*' (Zha, J., n.d.). These three scenes depict students from different social backgrounds learning *The Three Character Classic*.

Furthermore, as mentioned in *the Compilation of the Song Court Records: Cultivating Confucianism II* (*宋会要辑稿·崇儒二),* on the twenty-second day of the eighth month, Chancellor Cai Jing (蔡京, 1047–1126) and other ministers proposed establishing primary school departments in government schools throughout all states and counties and enrolling all children above the age of ten for schooling (Xu, S., n.d.). And according to the translation of the textual content of *the Grand Ming Huidian (Volume 78)*(*大明会典卷七十八*), the regulations on the enrolment of non-commissioned officers: in the seventeenth year of the Chenghua era (1481), the court ordered that the first-born sons of the officials and the children and grandchildren of officials who had submitted themselves to the imperial court were allowed to enter the government-run Confucian schools in the vicinity of their locations to study; it was forbidden for the gentry and the people of the various regions to counterfeit their household registrations and enrol in schools in violation of the regulations. Young children under the age of fifteen in the private sector had to be sent to school (Shen & Zhao, n.d.). In addition, according to *A History of China's imperial examination system*(*中国科举制度史),* the Zongxue (imperial clan school) (宗学) was the school for the children of the imperial family, and all the children of the clan who had reached the age of ten were required to enter the Zongxue for study. All the children of the commanding generals and guards who should succeed their fathers and brothers and who had reached the age of ten or more were required to attend the martial arts school (Wang, 2012). The data in these books suggest that the estimated age range

should be children under ten years old, which can be extended to under fifteen years old in rural areas.

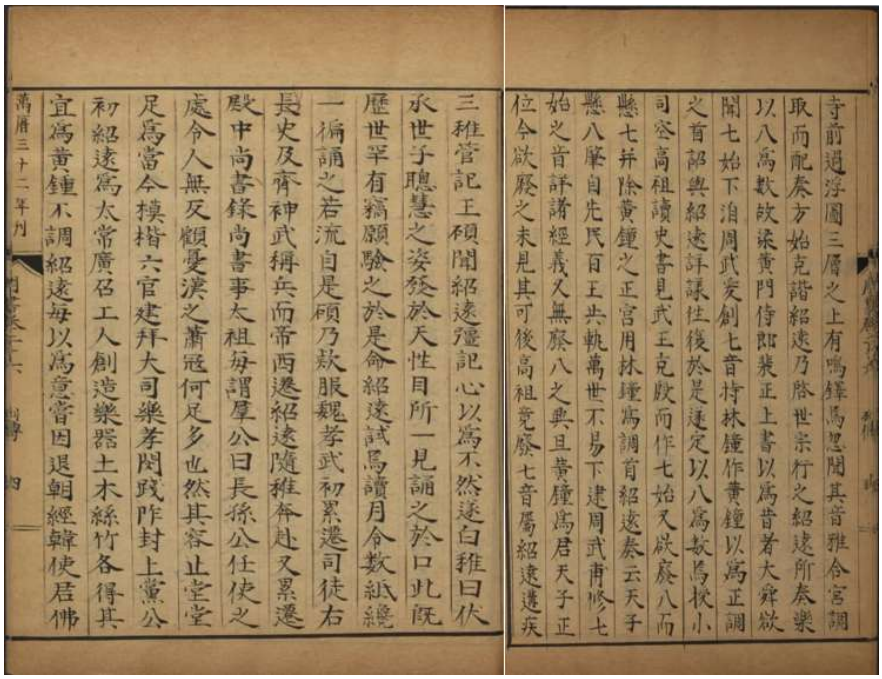


Figure 40: A page from 周书 [Zhou shu], vol. 26, recording a child prodigy renowned for his extraordinary memory. From 识典古籍 [Shidian Guji]. Public domain.

In addition to social background and age, learners can also be categorised according to the qualities emphasised by the educational culture of the time. Figure 40 illustrates how learning ability (particularly memory) was recognised and highly regarded among young students. *The Book of Zhou* (*周书)* tells the story that at the time, Yu Zhi was the governor of Shouchun, and Shao Yuan was still young, only 13 years old. Wang Shuo, who was then serving as a junior official, heard that Shao Yuan had a strong memory and was not convinced in his heart, so he reported to Yu Zhi, saying, 'I have heard that Shao Yuan has the talent of being intelligent, being born with it, and that he can recite what he sees with his eyes at once. Since this is a rare thing in all generations, I wish to verify it.' So, Yu Zhi ordered Shao Yuan to try. Shao Yuan read a few pages of *the Order of the Moon (礼记·月令),* and after reading it only once, he could recite it as smoothly as running water. From that moment on, Wang

Shuo was in complete awe of Shao Yuan (Linghu, n.d.). This suggests that an exceptional memory was taken as a mark of a child's educability.

In terms of social class, children in rural areas can read this book, and the royal prince of the royal family also reads it, indicating that it has broad applicability and is read by people from different social classes.

Regarding the gender of the students who studied this book, there is no mention of it in the above literature. However, due to the social customs of the Song and Ming Dynasties, women's opportunity to study was limited, with the exception of the daughters of high-ranking officials and ministers, who had the chance to read and learn to play musical instruments, chess-like games, calligraphy, and paintings, and a few common people taught their daughters to read for their own interests. This means only a small number of families allowed their daughters to study literacy. In addition, the literacy textbooks used to teach those female students were limited to the Women's Discipline and the Women's Virtue, and these kinds of books were written specifically for women to learn moral standards and guidance, though *The Three Character Classic* was not one of them, so the available evidence discussed here does not allow a firm conclusion about female learners.

Learners' characteristics can also be further defined in terms of the behavioural expectations placed on them. Zhu Xi, in his A Primer for Children, said,

> As a junior or a student, one should always maintain a humble and respectful attitude, speak gently and slowly, and refrain from shouting and laughing. When your parents, elder brothers, or elders teach and supervise you, just bow your head and accept with an open mind, don't contradict or make rash comments at will. If you do make a mistake when your elders are criticising you, don't try to defend yourself right away, but keep silent and explain in detail after

> a certain period of time. You can say, I may have neglected this matter, and I probably forgot it by chance before, or It may be that I did not consider the matter well enough at that time. In this way, you will not offend the elders, and the right and wrong of the matter will be naturally clarified.' (Zhu, n.d.).

This passage indicates that Zhu Xi (朱熹) insists that students should be respectful, speak gently, and keep their volume under control. When the teachers or elders teach a lesson, students should bow their heads and accept it; they should not contradict their elders or discuss them, and they should remain silent before politely explaining it to them. This indicates that the learners were positioned as subordinate, expected to defer to teachers and elders.

Overall, the learners represented in the educational context of *The Three Character Classic* may be understood as young, memorising, educable children and scholars. This image of the learner provides the basis for the following analysis of the five improvable relations constructed in *The Three Character Classic*.

After gaining a general understanding of the roles of users of this book, including both educators and learners. In accordance with the outline set out at the beginning of this chapter, the discussion now turns to the educational intentions behind this book.

5.2.3. Intended Outcomes in *The Three Character Classic*: A Relational Interpretation

The previous sections have examined the first two pedagogical elements in using *The Three Character Classic*: the teacher's role and the student's role, in other words, the answers to 'who' and 'whom'. This section begins to analyse what relation is improved, into what, why and how this relation is intended to be improved.

Next, among the many possible relations that could be improved by studying *The Three Character Classic*, five improvable intentions for educators are selected for this chapter to analyse and interpret, and to facilitate a side-by-side comparison of the two books in Chapter 6. These five relations correspond to the five chosen in Chapter 4 for the analysis of *Orbis Pictus*, that is, the relation between the student and phonological patterns, the relation between the student and characters, the relation between the student and the textual narrative, the relation between the student and their own conduct, and the relation between the student and the world order. In the analysis of each relation (what), expected changes in the students' relation (into what), as well as how and why this relation is improved (how and why), will be discussed for each relation separately based on selected sample verses from the book.

The discussion now begins with the first relation, the relation between the student and the pronunciation patterns, to explore what and how the educator intended to offer to students.

5.2.3.1. From the Three-Character Line to Fluent Recitation: Establishing Sound Patterns through Rhythm and Rhyme

The Three Character Classic 三字经 has been considered one of the most popular and enduring reading books for elementary students in China for the past six hundred years (Yu, 2012; Wu & Anderson, 1999). One reason could be its organisational structure. As the book's name implies, *The Three Character Classic* is composed entirely of three-character lines, most of which employ rhymes that are easy to catch and comprehend quickly, which could be used to teach pupils to speak. In this section, six verses are selected as examples, and the Chinese Hanyu Pinyin are used to explain the tone and rhyme rules. By analysing the following example verses, this subsection focuses on the relation between the learners and these rhythmic sound patterns and

examines how *The Three Character Classic* structures Chinese characters in a way that children can easily grasp. The discussion now turns to the six selected sample Verses from *The Three Character Classic*.

5.2.3.1.1. Example Verses

Verse 1. 人之初，性本善。 性相近，习相远 (Rén zhī chū, xìng běn shàn, Xìng xiāng jìn, xí xiāng yuǎn), which means that 'human nature is inherently good, and all human beings have this fundamental goodness, but their upbringing shapes their differences'. The words at the end of the paragraph create a staccato rhythm. For example, the words 善 (shàn) and 远 (yuǎn) rhyme, creating a staccato rhythm.

Verse 2. 苟不教，性乃迁。 教之道，贵以专 (Gǒu bù jiào, xìng nǎi qiān, Jiào zhī dào, guì yǐ zhuān), which means, 'If children are left untaught, their nature strays; the art of teaching and learning is that both the teachers and the students should dedicate their full attention to the class. The single words at the end of this paragraph form a staccato rhythm, for example, '迁' (qiān) and '专' (zhuān).

Verse 3. 昔孟母，择邻处。 子不学，断机杼 (Xī mèng mǔ, zé lín chǔ, Zǐ bù xué, duàn jī zhù), which means long ago, the Mother of Meng (refers to Mengzi's mother) selected a neighbourhood to dwell in by moving homes three times for a proper environment; when young Mengzi skipped school, his mother cut the woven cloth on her loom. The single words at the end of this paragraph form a staccato rhythm, for example, 处 (chù) and 杼 (zhù).

Verse 5. 养不教，父之过。 教不严，师之惰 (Yǎng bù jiào, fù zhī guò, Jiào bù yán, shī zhī duò), which means it is the father's fault if his child's life was

nurtured but without necessary education, and it is the teacher's fault if a student was not taught with strict discipline. The single words at the end of this paragraph form a staccato rhythm, for example, 过 (guò) and 惰 (duò).

Verse 7. 玉不琢，不成器。 人不学，不知义 (Yù bù zhuó, bù chéng qì, Rén bù xué, bù zhī yì), which means If jade is not carefully polished and carved, it cannot become a useful object; if a person is not cultivated with the necessary knowledge, he cannot understand the true meaning of morality, benevolence, righteousness and justice. The single words at the end of this paragraph form a staccato rhythm, for example, 器 (qì) and 义 (yì).

Verse 15. 曰春夏，曰秋冬。 此四时，运不穷 (Yuē chūn xià, yuē qiū dōng, Cǐ sì shí, yùn bù qióng), which means that there is a spring, summer, autumn and winter; these four seasons constitute a cyclical and continuous process. The single words at the end of this paragraph form a staccato rhythm, for example, 冬 (dōng) and 穷 (qióng).

Each of these six stanzas consists of four shorter lines, the second of which rhymes with the fourth, as indicated by the bold black text: 'an' as in 善 (shàn) and 远 (yuǎn), 'an' as in 迁 (qiān) and 专 (zhuān), 'u' as in 处 (chù) and 杼 (zhù), 'uo' as in 过 (guò) and 惰 (duò), 'i' as in 器 (qì) and 义 (yì), and 'ong' as in 冬 (dōng) and 穷 (qióng). When reciting these sentences, students pause every three words, and every six words form a distinct staccato rhythm. This rhythmic pattern [32] helps students

32 Nowadays, the *Three Character Classic* we read does not seem to conform to these two elements of rhyme strictly; it could be largely the result of historical changes in language, such as changes in tones with changing times and a drastic simplification of the final system, that the traditional *the Three Character Classic* actually conforms to the laws and requirements of rhyme (Zhang, 2017).

memorise quickly; even if they do not understand the meaning of what they are reciting, they can still read it out rhythmically.

5.2.3.1.2. What Relation is Improved?

By studying the textual structure of *The Three Character Classic*, learners can quickly master the simple, fixed rhythmic structure of classical Chinese. This method is especially suitable for children who are already familiar with everyday spoken language and nursery rhymes or for those who are new to the language but have not yet mastered the strict tonal patterns, rhymes and pauses that characterise classical texts. Therefore, using sentences such as those in the sample Verses of *The Three Character Classic* shown in this subsection, the relation between the student and their understanding of the classical Chinese phonological structure and sound of characters is intended to be improved.

5.2.3.1.3. Into What?

This relation gradually developed into familiarity with the text's rhythmic and intonational fluency. The symmetrical syntax, parallel structure, and sensitivity to end rhymes practised in *The Three Character Classic* prepared students for the stylistic norms that governed the imperial examinations and other elegant texts of the Ming and Qing dynasties. Through repeated practice of these compact, rhythmic units, students gradually developed their pronunciation and the habit of speaking in a fixed rhythm.

5.2.3.1.4. How is This Relation Improved?

Firstly, although the verses of the time were predominantly composed of five or seven characters per unit, *The Three Character Classic* is organised into three-character units, making it easy for students to catch up and learn, a form suited to children’s

reading and speaking capacities. Specifically, in *The Three Character Classic,* the authors arrange the text in a structure in which every three words form a unit, two units form a sentence, and two sentences form a verse; usually, one verse expresses a single idea. Take Verse 5 养不教 (yǎng bù jiào), 父之过 (fù zhī guò), 教不严 (jiào bù yán), 师之惰 (shī zhī duò) as an example. In these twelve words, every three words form a unit, with a pause between each unit, aiding memorisation and recitation. The first six words mean, 'It is the duty of the father to ensure that his child receives the nourishment and necessary education required for life'; while the other six words mean 'it is the duty of the teacher to teach his pupils with rigorous discipline.' The two sentences are presented side by side, using the same format and parallel content. Such parallel arrangements recur throughout the text, such as Verse 7 玉不琢，不成器; 人不学，不知义 (Yù bù zhuó, bù chéng qì, Rén bù xué, bù zhī yì). This juxtaposition of a regular three-beat unit with the rise and fall of tone makes lines easy for young learners to imitate and follow.

The author also draws on the rhyming conventions of classical Chinese verse. According to Zhang (2017), words that strictly rhyme must fulfil two conditions: the same tone and the same rhyme. Only when these two elements are present at the same time can the beauty of the most harmonious rhyme be displayed. Classical Chinese phonology distinguishes four tones, including level (píng 平), rising (shǎng 上), departing (qù 去), and entering (rù 入), of which the level tone is termed *píngshēng* (平声), and the remaining three are collectively termed *zèshēng* (仄声), the oblique tones. In regulated verse, rhyme typically falls on even-numbered lines, draws on level-tone rhymes, and is not changed mid-poem (Zhang, 2017).

The Three Character Classic, as an elementary primer rather than regulated verse, follows these conventions in this way: it rhymes across paired lines, but changes rhyme freely from one passage to the next, so that each short group carries its own

rhyme rather than sustaining a single rhyme throughout. Take Verse 3 '昔孟母，择邻处；子不学，断机杼' (Xī mèng mǔ, zé lín chǔ, Zǐ bù xué, duàn jī zhù) as an example. In this group, the four units end with mǔ, chǔ, xué, and zhù. It can be seen that the second and fourth sentences share the same ending, which fit the above pattern. Take another example in Verse 15, '曰春夏，曰秋冬；此四时，运不穷' (Yuē chūn xià, yuē qiū dōng, Cǐ sì shí, yùn bù qióng). In this group, the four units end with xià, dōng, shí, and qióng. It can be observed that the same rhyming pattern applies: the second and fourth syllables end in the same rhyme, which is in accordance with the rhyming pattern mentioned above. This recurring end-rhyme helps children read with ease and builds a habituated sense of linguistic pattern.

Once learners have grasped the three-character form and the rhyming sense of language, the teacher instructs students to read aloud repeatedly until they can recite fluently. Zhu Xi, in his 童蒙须知 (A Primer for Children), said that students need only to recite the book many times so that it will naturally become catchy, and its contents will last for a long time and will not be forgotten (Zhu, n.d.). He cited the older saying that if one reads a book a thousand times, the book's meaning will naturally emerge. This is to say that after one has read a book many times, one does not need others to explain it but can understand its meaning by oneself (Zhu, n.d.). In this passage, he quoted the words of the ancients to illustrate the rule that reciting a book enough times can help one understand its meaning, stressing the importance of repeated recitation to form muscle memory and linguistic habituation through repeated reading (Zhu, n.d.). Zhu Xi further proposed that studying a classic should engage with three things: the mind, the eyes, and the mouth. If the mind is not present, the eyes will not look carefully. If the mind and eyes are not focused, and one is merely reciting casually, one will never be able to remember. Even if one does remember temporarily, it will not last. In this passage, Zhu Xi presents his understanding of the principle of

recitation. He believed that the key to efficient memorisation was for students to work on three things: concentration, more reading, and more recitation (Zhu, n.d.).

Similarly, in *家塾教学法 (the Family-school teaching methods*), 唐彪 Tang Biao has recommended reading the same text ten times a day for ten days before attempting to recite it; revisiting it every three days and an epigraph every ten days, and by revising in a cycle, there will be no forgotten content (Zhao & Wan, 1992). Through such repetition, one can master the laws of level and oblique, familiarise oneself with the rhythm of tones, and understand the rationale behind the creation of poems and fugues.

It can therefore be inferred that the most basic and fundamental way of learning *The Three Character Classic* should be to recite it over and over again until it can be recited fluently. By reading the rise and fall of the tones and the rhyming structures, students learn to form a speaking and writing habit that later underpinned the formal demands of examination composition.

5.2.3.1.5. Why Does This Relation Need to Be Improved?

Based on the fact that *The Three Character Classic* is composed of short, balanced phrases, making it easy for children to adapt from language used at home to a formal language in the classroom, the rhythmic structure of three characters per line in the text helps students to read it aloud repeatedly and commit it to memory. Once a child can read a passage fluently, they can begin to recite it; once they can recite, they are ready to move on to the next stage of learning, such as listening to the teacher's explanations of this passage and practising language skills such as speaking and writing.

Similar observations can be found in other literature. For example, in *唐才子传 the Biographies of the Literary Masters of the Tang Dynasty*: 骆宾王 Luo Binwang says,

Wang Bo could write some words at the age of six, and Luo Binwang could write poetry at the age of seven; they were able to read and recite ancient texts from an early age, and not only could they read, but they could also write ancient texts and poems in the old style, to a large extent by learning from foundational primers of the kind that later evolved into works like *The Three Character Classic*, and by imitating the modes of speaking and writing that were needed to meet the requirements of the imperial examinations (Xin, n.d.).

In the condition of using *The Three Character Classic* to teach, due to the age group of students being children or even younger, it could be assumed that Confucian education for youngsters learning begins with listening and repetition before interpretation. Therefore, it can be inferred that ancient Chinese scholars considered mastery of pronunciation to be the foundation of all subsequent learning. The way this language spread may be related to the limited educational conditions in ancient China, which often lacked textbooks and transmitted knowledge primarily through word of mouth, requiring correct pronunciation to prevent mistakes that could hinder later understanding. This condition, therefore, requires that students must first be able to read aloud correctly and fluently before they can understand the meaning or apply what they have learned.

In summary, in Relation 1 of *The Three Character Classic,* the educator intends to improve the student's relation with the sounds of classical Chinese through its three-character form, its paired-line rhyme, and sustained recitation. During this process, learners move from an intuitive sense of spoken rhythm towards a habituated command of the text's tones, rhymes and pauses. At this initial stage, the world represented in *The Three Character Classic* is encountered not through visual observation, as in *Orbis Pictus*, but through a rhythmic textual form that can be heard, repeated, and memorised.

This sound-based relation forms the most basic layer on which the later relations are built, the student's relation with words (Relation 2, Section 5.2.3.2) and with discourse (Relation 3, Section 5.2.3.3). The discussion now turns to the next relation (Relation 2), From Strokes to Characters: Acquiring Meaning through Character Form and Structure, to explore how the book *The Three Character Classic* improves students' relation with words.

5.2.3.2. From Strokes to Characters: Acquiring Meaning through Character Form and Structure

After gaining the initial understanding of the rules of pronunciation and rhyme in *The Three Character Classic*, the next step is to explore the visual and semantic forms of individual characters present in this book. As is well known, English words are constructed from alphabetic letters, with a distinction between upper- and lowercase letters. Chinese characters, on the other hand, are composed of strokes and appear as autonomous graphic units (Yin, 2016). In this section, verses selected from *The Three Character Classic* are examined with a focus on the characters and their structures. Through analysis, this thesis attempts to explore how the author and the teachers of the time used *The Three Character Classic* to teach students to read and write traditional Chinese characters.

This section focuses on how learners transition from viewing Chinese characters as phonetic units to viewing them as written forms composed of strokes and components. *The Three Character Classic* itself does not illustrate character structure; the character analysis presented below is not intended to reconstruct the actual teaching practice in Song and Yuan dynasty classrooms but rather serves as an interpretative tool to demonstrate how these Chinese characters convey specific

meanings through their form and textual context. The following selected excerpts[33] are examined first.

5.2.3.2.1. Example Verses

> Verse 11. 首**孝悌**，次见闻。 知某数，识某文。 (This means the most important thing to do is to practise the virtues of filial piety to parents and fraternity to brothers, and after that, the second important thing to do is to acquire knowledge and increase one's insight. In addition, one must master basic numbering skills and know important classical texts.)

The two characters 孝（xiào） and 悌（tì） suggest their meanings through their structure. 孝（xiào） is formed of 耂/老 (elder) above and 子 (child) below. The placement of the child beneath the elder gives the graph its sense: the child helps an elderly person along or supports them (Xu, n.d.). In the same verse, '悌' is composed of two radicals: '忄' (heart) and '弟' (brother), which is in accordance with its meaning as respecting brother (Xu, n.d.).

> Verse 24 (1). 父子恩，夫妇**从**。 兄则友，弟则恭。 This means there should be love between fathers and sons and harmony between husbands and wives. The elder brother should love the younger sibling as a friend, and the younger sibling should honour the elder brother.

The character 从 (cóng) is formed of two figures of 人 (person) set in the same direction, one behind the other, which is in accordance with its actual meaning that one person follows the other (Xu, n.d.),

[33] The verses selected here are not consecutive; they are chosen for the characters whose structure most clearly illustrates how form conveys meaning.

Verse 24 (2). 长幼序，友与朋。君则敬，臣则忠。(This means there should be an order of honour between those who are older and those who are younger, and friendship and honesty between friends. The ruler should be respected, and the subject should be loyal.)

The character 忠 (zhōng) is composed of the character 心 (heart) in the lower part and 中 (middle) in the upper part of the character. The character 心 indicates that this word is related to the state of the heart, while 中 means the middle, which indicates that 忠 can be interpreted as remain impartial in the heart and to do one's best to treat people or things fairly (Xu, n.d.).

As shown in the sample characters above, Chinese characters can be viewed as structured forms, and this structure can be used to infer and analyse the possible meanings of words. Furthermore, individual words resonate with the meaning of the sentences in which they appear; the textual context of *The Three Character Classic* can therefore be used to explain a character's meaning. Based on these observed connections, some inferences can be made about how this book was used to teach Chinese characters.

5.2.3.2.2. What Relation is Improved?

In this section (Relation 2), after the pupils were introduced to *The Three Character Classic* through pronunciation and rhythm, the educational focus shifted from the sounds of Chinese characters to their forms and meanings. With the teacher's guidance, the pupils learn to recognise traditional Chinese characters, understand their structure, and memorise how to write them. Learning Chinese vocabulary, therefore, bridges spoken language and written literacy. In that sense, the relation between pupils and their understanding of Chinese characters, including character structure and its meaning, is intended to be improved.

5.2.3.2.3. Into What?

This relation develops into the ability to read Chinese characters as structured forms whose components carry meaning. Therefore, after mastering rhythmic recitation, through the study of Chinese character structure, the student learns to look for clues about the meaning of unfamiliar characters from their structure and components, which could be beneficial for the next step, such as independent reading.

5.2.3.2.4. How is this Relation Improved?

One of the key functions of *The Three Character Classic* during the Song and Yuan eras, when it was widely used, was it could be used to teach people how to write. A possible pedagogical process may begin by teaching the vocabulary in this book; teachers should consider students' ages and traits to tailor their instruction. To teach students to learn a single word, several aspects need to be covered, including pronunciation, strokes, and meaning. Teachers can teach pronunciation by leading students in recitation or by instructing them on the pronunciation of word components to infer the pronunciation pattern of the whole word. Pronunciation, however, is not the focus of this chapter, so the discussion is not extended here, but rather focuses on analysing possible ways of teaching the structure of the word and its meaning.

Analysing the meaning of words based on their structure is an important way of teaching (Zhang, 2013). The sample verses in the previous section show that a character's graphic form often conveys its meaning. For example, the form of 孝 (xiào) depicts a child supporting an elder, and 忠 zhōng suggests an impartial mind. As seen in previous examples, because of the characteristics of Chinese character glyphs, parts of the character often convey its meaning. It can therefore be inferred that, when teaching the structure of individual Chinese characters, teachers can first guide pupils to observe the character's overall look, then break it down into more easily

understandable components, then explain how these character components affect the meaning or pronunciation of the characters, and guide learners in tracing them stroke by stroke. Consequently, students will understand more easily if teachers first explain the key components before going on to explain the character's overall meaning and the specific rules for writing it. After understanding the character's structure, students can copy it and learn to write it with the teacher's guidance.

Where a character's meaning is not evident from its form alone, the surrounding verse supplies further clarification. Therefore, the author provides a more detailed explanation in each text verse, offering a context for the use of the word or as a more detailed introduction to its meaning. Take Verse 25 again to illustrate, the character 忠 (zhōng) means to remain impartial in the heart and to do one's best to treat people or things fairly, and the whole sentence (text verse) means subjects (subordinates) should be loyal to his sovereign, which is basically the same meaning but to offer more explanation to associate the understanding of the students.

5.2.3.2.5. Why Does This Relation Need to Be Improved?

According to Zhang (2013), given the vast number of Chinese characters and their complex written structure, beginners first need to recognise a sufficient number of basic words before they can effectively progress to more comprehensive reading, writing, and text comprehension. With its concise and regular phrases, *The Three Character Classic* provides a useful textual framework for this process, as it introduces children to a large number of basic Chinese characters through short, easy-to-memorise phrases. By studying the structure of Chinese characters, memorising how to write them, and recognising that they are structured symbols rather than arbitrary marks, students can develop a deeper understanding of written language. Consequently, the mastery of Chinese characters gained through *The Three Character Classic* may have laid the foundations for the subsequent study of more profound

Confucian classics. At the same time, within the context of historical education, this literacy also provided a foundation for further engagement in examination-oriented learning and offered some learners the opportunity to advance their careers through the imperial examination system. From this perspective, it is essential to improve students' relation with their understanding of Chinese characters, as this facilitates a transition from rote recitation to literacy, from literacy to reading, and ultimately from reading to more in-depth textual analysis.

In summary, based on the improvement of students' relation with the sound of the Chinese language of Relation 1 (Section 5.2.3.1), the educator intends to improve the students' relation with Chinese characters through the analysis of graphic form and structure, so that the learner comes to read characters as meaningful, composed units. In this way, the world is represented to the child through visible written form, with each character that can be read as a condensed graphic structure.

The discussion is now moving to Relation 3, From Words to Discourse: Communicating Ideas through Compressed Historical Narratives, to explore which other relations the book may be intended to improve.

5.2.3.3. From Words to Discourse: Communicating Ideas through Compressed Historical Narratives

Once the students have established a basic understanding of the sound and form of the single character in *The Three Character Classic*, they are encouraged to move from simply reading aloud together and identifying single characters to using the language learned in more advanced contexts, such as connected expression and composition. This section examines how *The Three Character Classic* improves students' relation with discourse in the ancient Chinese context.

5.2.3.3.1. Example Verses

In *The Three Character Classic*, the author devotes nearly a quarter of the book to the history of the period, from the legendary age of Fuxi to the end of the Song Dynasty (roughly from before the third millennium BCE to the late thirteenth century CE). In this section, six excerpts from *The Three Character Classic* are analysed to examine how the author compresses and arranges this history to teach their students.

> Verse 42. 经子通，读诸史。 考世系，知终始。 This means, first, (one must be) well versed in the Confucian classics (and the writings of the Hundred Schools of Thought) and then study various history books; examine the lineage of successive dynasties, and (one will be able to) understand the reasons for their rise and fall all the time.

> Verse 48. 周武王，始诛纣。 八百载，最长久。 This means that King Wu of Zhou led a crusade and eventually overthrew the tyrant King Zhou of Shang. (The Zhou Dynasty) lasted for 800 years, making it the longest dynasty (in Chinese history).

> Verse 58. 唐高祖，起义师。 除隋乱，创国基。 This means Tang Gaozu (Li Yuan) launched a righteous army (in Taiyuan in 617) to quell the turmoil (at the end of the Sui Dynasty) and started the foundation (of the Tang Empire).

> Verse 60. 梁唐晋，及汉周。 称五代，皆有由。 This means there are five dynasties called Later Liang, Later Tang, Later Jin, Later Han, and Later Zhou. These five dynasties are collectively known as the Five Dynasties, and (each rose and fell) for its own reasons.

> Verse 62. 十七史，全在兹。 载治乱，知兴衰。 This means these seventeen canons of formal history are all contained here. (These historical books) contain

the experiences and truths of the world of governance and the world of chaos, (and reading these books can help one) understand the rise and fall of a nation.

Verse 63. 读史书，考实录。通古今，若亲目。This means (students should) carefully study the history books of the past and look up the actual records of the emperors and kings. They should be able to see the history of the past and the present as if they had seen it with their own eyes.

5.2.3.3.2. What Relation is Improved?

Based on these selected sample verses and their English translations, it can be seen that the text itself does not provide a full narrative but rather presents information such as names of dynasties, chronology, and commentary phrases in a highly concise manner. To make sense of such verses, the student must read beyond the individual character and grasp how characters combine into connected, meaning-bearing statements that describe the incident, the circumstances leading up to it, and those following it. In this sense, the relation between the student and the discourse that lies beyond the single character is intended to be improved.

5.2.3.3.3. Into What?

This relation develops into the ability to read the text's compressed phrases as connected discourse. At this stage, students have moved beyond recognising individual characters to understanding how they can be combined to form meaningful phrases and historical allusions. These refined historical narratives not only provide historical information but also serve as exemplars of writing and speaking discourse in traditional Chinese for students, helping them move from comprehending the text to producing it.

5.2.3.3.4. How is this Relation Improved?

As the selected verses from the sample texts in this chapter show, among these historical stories, the author of *The Three Character Classic* lists the sequence of the dynasties' changes, condensing well-known historical events into concise, well-organised phrases. This compression follows in large part from the three-character form: three characters per sentence, with much of the content expressed in highly abbreviated form and some omitted altogether. Consequently, the meanings of these phrases are not immediately obvious because they can only be understood in relation to the wider stories they reference. Without an understanding of the narrative and historical layers behind these phrases, students will only be able to identify characters, but not grasp their full meaning or significance.

This is made explicit in the text itself. According to the sample Verse 63 读史书，考实录。通古今，若亲目 after reading the classic literature listed in this book, one must also research the genealogies of each dynasty and generation, and the causes of their rise and fall, to draw valuable lessons from historical precedent. In addition, the author points out that reading history is only the first step, and that people should go further by studying historical materials and grasping the causes and effects, as well as the far-reaching impact, of historical events from the past to the present from the viewpoint of those who have experienced them. Because it is not enough to know a certain word or phrase, to know the whole meaning, one must also understand the event or person to which it refers.

Therefore, when teaching these highly condensed texts, teachers must link the text's content to the narrative and provide students with as accurate and detailed an explanation as possible, including historical background and cultural references, so that students can thoroughly understand the meaning of the ideas behind the words. After students have some understanding of the language combinations in this pattern

and with an improved grasp of historical allusions, they can imitate and write in a similar pattern. This writing pattern can then be practised for use in the Imperial Examination, especially where historical allusion is expected.

5.2.3.3.5. Why Does This Relation Need to Be Improved?

The use of historical allusions and the lessons they bring to writing essays is, first and foremost, a requirement for the imperial examination system to advocate the establishment of a history section for the admission of scholars. In the Southern Song Dynasty, many scholars valued history in the imperial examinations, and among them, Zhu Xi was a leader. Zhu Xi wrote an article of more than 6,000 words called *学校贡举私议 (Xuexiao gongju siyi, Private Proposals on Schools and the Examination System*), in which he put forward a more detailed opinion on the reform of the imperial examination. Among his main points about historiography was that the imperial examinations should include historiography, from the Shiji to the History of the Five Dynasties and beyond (Tang, 2000).

Further, Zhu Xi believed that by studying these historical works, one can understand the rise and fall of the past and present, as well as the cycles of rule and chaos, gain and loss, all of which are essential and indispensable knowledge in today's world and cannot be overlooked. As a result, the purpose of studying history is to gain historical information and lessons, which perfectly incorporates Zhu Xi's concept of experiential learning. Zhu Xi believes that a scholar must read history. He stated that, as someone who has passed the county-level imperial exam, although it is not necessary to study esoteric reasons, one must also understand the rise and fall of ancient and contemporary existence, why certain countries in history flourished or declined, and how peaceful and chaotic times come about. One cannot claim to be a scholar if one does not understand these fundamental concepts. One must know all of these things before one can truly become an uneducated man. The lessons learnt from history can

serve as a reference for the ruler's governance to reform poor governance and revitalise the Song dynasty (Tang, 2000).

The requirement of the imperial examination system, together with the scholarly authority, suggests that students learn to use historical allusions in writing test-responsive eight-legged essays, which can be understood as a major reason for the numerous references to historical allusions in *The Three Character Classic*. The benefits of this are, on the one hand, that students acquire the initial understanding of the style and mode of writing for the imperial examinations, and, on the other hand, that it serves as a guide for drawing on historical experiences on which later reading and composition can draw.

In summary, Relation 3 improves the learner's relation to discourse by guiding the learner from individual characters towards compressed historical narratives and moral-political judgment. At this stage, the world represented by *The Three Character Classic* appears as a compressed historical order, in which dynastic succession, rise and decline, and moral judgement are made memorable through concise textual form.

After examining the student's relation with sound (Relation 1, Section 5.2.3.1) and with characters (Relation 2, Section 5.2.3.2), and with discourse in this section, the discussion now turns to the fourth relation, From Language learning to Ethical Action: Internalising Moral Principles through Imitation, which examines how *The Three Character Classic* was used to shape students' conduct in daily life, beyond language knowledge.

5.2.3.4. From Language Learning to Ethical Action: Internalising Moral Principles through Imitation

Beyond serving as a tool for educating students on the sound and character structure of traditional Chinese and how to use it in writing, such as in concise historical

narratives, *The Three Character Classic* can be employed for further educational purposes. For instance, the author also presents a series of brief exemplary virtue tales for pupils to learn from, highlighting specific behaviours worthy of admiration and imitation. These stories employ narrative forms to demonstrate diverse scenarios and moral lessons to students. In this section, several selected examples[34] will be examined to analyse the educational relation behind the author's arrangement in the book and explore how *The Three Character Classic* links text learning with the formation of moral behaviour through exemplary imitation.

5.2.3.4.1. Example Verses

Verse 4. 窦燕山，有义方。 教五子，名俱扬。 This means Dou Yanshan (Dou Yujun) mastered the correct method of education; he raised five sons, all of whom were famous in the world. This story conveys the virtue of proper technique, that is, 义方 Yi Fang, and exemplifies the key role of family education in children's success.

Verse 9. 香九龄，能温席。 孝于亲，所当执。 This means when Huang Xiang was nine years old, he knew how to warm the bedding for his parents; filial piety and respect for parents are something everyone should do. This story expresses the author's understanding of '孝' (xiao), 'filial piety' and the concrete embodiment of the virtue of 'filial piety' in social life, that is, using his body to warm his father's quilt in winter to show that he is sympathetic to his parents' coldness and warmth.

[34] The verses selected here are not consecutive; they are chosen as exemplary tales of conduct with my own translation.

Verse 10. 融四岁，能让梨。 弟于长，宜先知。 This means when Kong Rong was four years old, he knew how to give the big pear to his elder brother; the virtue of respecting one's elder brother should be cultivated from childhood. This story expresses the author’s understanding of the traditional virtue of 悌 Ti ‘brotherly love’ and the practical manifestation of this virtue in social relationships, that is, honouring one’s elder brother, for example, by deliberately choosing the smaller pear and giving the larger one to one's elder brother.

Verse 71. 苏老泉，二十七。 始发愤，读书籍。 This means Su Laoquan (Su Xun) was only twenty-seven years old when he was inspired to study and began to study the classics. This story tells of Su Xun, a writer of the Northern Song Dynasty, who did not give up even after the ancients believed he had passed the best age for study (27 years old) and began making great efforts to become a successful literary scholar in the end. The intention is to praise the virtue of persevering in hard work and encourage students to pursue lifelong learning.

Verse 73. 若梁灏，八十二。 对大廷，魁多士。 This means a man named Liang Hao, who is at the age of eighty-two, won the Imperial Examination in a single stroke and became the first of many scholars. This story aims to introduce the virtue of not giving up and of continuing to learn until becoming a successful scholar, underscoring the author’s emphasis on encouraging people to continue learning throughout their lives.

Verse 75. 莹八岁，能咏诗。 泌七岁，能赋碁。 This means these two stories introduce two children, 莹 Ying and 泌 Mi, who were not only smart but also diligent in their studies, and both later became famous scholars, illustrating the virtue of gifted people who continue to work hard.

Verse 76. 唐刘晏，方七岁。 举神童，作正字。 This story tells of the prodigy Liu Yan, who at the age of seven passed the Tang imperial examinations and was appointed by the government to an important official position, demonstrating the character of a young prodigy who combines both talent and responsibility.

Verse 81. 犬守夜，鸡司晨。 苟不学，曷为人。 This implies that a dog can keep watch at night and a rooster will announce the dawn; if a man does not learn, how can he be called a man? These two stories analogise human learning to the instincts of the dog and the rooster, emphasising that learning is a human virtue and an obligation inherent to human nature.

Verse 82. 蚕吐丝，蜂酿蜜。 人不学，不如物。 This means that the natural duty of the silkworm is to spit out silk and make cocoons and that the natural duty of the bee is to make honey; if a man does not know how to learn, he will be inferior to these animals. These two analogies draw a parallel between the natural phenomena of silkworms spinning silk and bees making honey, and the human quest for knowledge, emphasising that learning is both a virtue and a necessity for survival.

The abovementioned stories in *The Three Character Classic* extend from human exemplars to animals and insects. The three stories of Dou Yanshan, Huang Xiang, and Kong Rong (Verses 4, 9, 10) aim to teach students to maintain kinship by being respectful and considerate to their family members on a daily basis; the exemplars of Su Laoquan, Liang Hao, and the scholar students (Verses 71, 73, 75, 76) show academic perseverance at different ages; and the fables of the dog, the chicken, the silkworm, and the bee (Verses 81, 82) emphasise that learning is a fundamental human duty. These stories in *The Three Character Classic* provide students with clear guidelines for behaviour, urging them to demonstrate the virtues of filial piety, brotherly love, diligence and responsibility in their studies and daily lives.

5.2.3.4.2. What Relation is Improved?

Unlike the direct instructions or historical stories illustrated in the previous three relations, in Relation 4, the moral actions of historical figures and creatures of the natural world are presented to the children as concrete examples that serve as models of conduct. Characters such as 孝 (filial piety), 悌 (brotherly devotion), and 忠 (loyalty) were taught in the first three relations, focusing on their reading, speaking, and writing. In this relation, it becomes clear how these abstract ideas take shape as clear patterns of behaviour: warming bedding for parents (verse 9), giving the bigger pear (verse 10), and not letting studies slide as one gets older (verse 71). In this sense, the text reveals a pedagogical intention to improve the relation between students and their own conduct.

5.2.3.4.3. Into What?

The example verses state human and animal deeds for students to read and learn from, hoping they will emulate these actions, thereby enhancing their moral reasoning and practical abilities in daily life. Consequently, the earlier reading, writing, and narrative skills now serve as a foundation for shaping moral conduct. These exemplars provide pupils with concrete models to imitate so that abstract virtues become habits of action. By studying tales of traditional virtues and the deeds of distinguished figures, children more readily establish moral concepts and behavioural habits through imitation. Consequently, when employing these verses, students' habits are morally cultivated, and they become able to recognise and practise these virtues in their daily lives.

5.2.3.4.4. How is This Relation Improved?

The sample verses show that the author employs a series of role models and tales to portray a man of virtue, either urging children to respect their elders in verse 9 or

encouraging them to study diligently in verses 71 and 73. It can be seen that the author attempts to use typical examples to teach rather than engage in empty preaching. Many researchers have examined this method of attracting young children to follow and practise. For example, according to Zhang's (1998, p. 108) definition of moral education in his article *The Concept of Moral Education*, the connotation of moral education is that operations and demonstrations are carried out to nurture and cultivate the learner based on their needs and characteristics, and the learner imitates and practises according to the educator (Zhang, 1998, p. 108). Through imitation, the learner comes to understand and follow the objective principles of nature and society.

Accordingly, it can be observed that ancient China emphasised moral education and promoted the formation of moral habits and moral conceptions through the use of role models for people to emulate. Teachers can teach the content of the textbook by incorporating model stories from the text, prompting students to think about their own circumstances with the protagonist of the text, praising and encouraging the behaviours of those who do the same thing, and suggesting that they emulate the practices of the protagonist of the text if they are not doing enough or if they have not yet thought about it themselves. This learning mechanism takes full account of young learners' learning habits, highlighting imitation of role models as a central method of moral education at the time.

5.2.3.4.5. Why Does this Relation Need to Be Improved?

The grounds for improving this relation lie in the view of the learner set out at the very start of the book. In Verse 1, the author says 人之初，性本善；性相近，习相远 (Human nature at birth is fundamentally good, and all people share this fundamental goodness, but nurture shapes later differences), which points out that this book acknowledges students' educability. It is precisely on this basis that the book

The Three Character Classic has arranged its content for students to learn. In the example verses it can be seen that learning Chinese with *The Three Character Classic* is not just about memorising word structures but about grasping the moral principles behind the structure of the characters. The gradual progression from text to action reveals that the educational process behind studying *The Three Character Classic* is not just an intellectual pursuit but also about the kind of person they want to become. *The Three Character Classic* also contains implicit moral requirements for individuals, as illustrated in the following verses:

> Verse 18. 曰仁义，礼智信。 此五常，不容紊。 A direct translation of this text into English is that to be a human being, one must follow 五常 (Wuchang, five constant virtues): benevolence, righteousness, ritual propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness, and they are not to be confused. From these words, it can be inferred that the author reveals his ideal virtues for a perfect individual.
>
> Verse 11. 首孝弟，次见闻。 知某数，识某文。 This means the most important thing to do is to practise the virtues of filial piety to parents and fraternity to brothers, and after that, the second important thing to do is to acquire knowledge and increase one’s insight. In addition, one must master basic numbering skills and know important classical texts.

In verse 18, Kongzi presented his interpretation of virtue, namely: 仁 Benevolence, as the fundamental principle of Confucianism, which is a principle of coexistence and harmony (Kongzi, n.d.). Benevolence requires people to value themselves and care for others' welfare. At its heart lies compassion, especially for parents, brothers, and sisters, and for the proper maintenance of relationships with friends and strangers. 义 Righteousness, which means having a proper sense of what is morally right, especially in terms of performing one’s moral duties, and ‘Make it your guiding principle to be dutiful and trustworthy and always move in the direction of what is

right' (Kongzi, n.d.). 礼 Ritual propriety means restraining oneself and returning to the rites, which constitutes Goodness (Kongzi, n.d.). The specifics of ritual propriety have been insightfully described as providing a 'social' or 'cultural' grammar for interactions with others. 智 Wisdom means overcoming confusion and properly assessing the character of persons. It also has a practical dimension: the wise work to ensure social harmony among the common people (Kongzi, n.d.).

Moreover, as mentioned in Verse 11 of *The Three Character Classic*, it says the most important thing to do is to practise the virtues of filial piety to parents and fraternity to brothers, and after that, the second most important thing to do is to learn knowledge and increase one's insight, which also explicitly prioritises moral virtues such as filial piety and fraternal duty over scientific knowledge. This may relate to Kongzi's proposition in the Analects: Wei zheng, that governing by virtue holds greater promise than maintaining social order with law and regulations (Kongzi, n.d.). Kongzi and his disciples frequently debated this very issue, and the archetypes of moral character most frequently discussed were essentially the sage, the benevolent, the gentleman, and the petty man.

Concerning the sage, Kongzi once offered a relatively explicit definition. According to *the Analects (Yong ye)*, Zigong asked, 'If someone were to bestow widespread benefits upon the common people and assist the masses, what manner of person would that be?' 'Could such a person be deemed benevolent?' Kongzi replied, 'This is more than mere benevolence; it must be the mark of a sage!' Even Yao and Shun feared they could not achieve such height!' 'The so-called benevolent person helps others to succeed when he pursues his own success; he is one who assists others to achieve when he pursues his own achievement, even if it is only a small and insignificant one.' Concerning the gentleman, Kongzi said that a gentleman endeavours to cultivate the three noble qualities of benevolence, wisdom, and courage through diligent study of the classics (Kongzi, n.d.). As for the villain, Kongzi often compares the gentleman's

character to that of the villain, noting that the gentleman values righteousness while the villain is profit-oriented (Kongzi, n.d.). The petty man, as named by Kongzi, generally refers to those lacking the self-awareness to improve their virtues, who disregard righteousness and prioritise personal gain.

Combining these texts, it may be inferred that Kongzi held the view that the sage possesses the greatest benevolence and has a heart that extends grace to all under heaven, bestowing it widely upon the people: the sage possesses the greatest wisdom to bestow grace and aid the multitude to cross over to the shore of happiness, the sage possesses the greatest courage because one wouldn't achieve success without steadfast conviction and an unyielding spirit.

The exposition of these four stages indicates that individuals at each level possess varying degrees of virtue, roughly distinguished by the extent of their desires, ranging from selflessness (concern for the common good) to selfishness (personal materialistic pursuits). Though it is difficult, if not impossible, for any individual to achieve complete selflessness, that is to say, one can never become a sage, striving to advance towards the highest stage and elevating one's self-awareness is nonetheless encouraged by Kongzi. The key to this process of improvement is to study, memorise, and chant the traditional classics under the guidance of a learned teacher. Through such practice, virtues are cultivated, and insights and aspirations are raised, thus getting closer to becoming sages.

Taken together, although *The Three Character Classic* does not directly expound upon or advocate the Confucian moral tradition, its textual details actually set out a representative Confucian moral framework in detail; for example, regulating one's conduct through the Five Constant Virtues and emulating the sages. *The Three Character Classic* distils these principles into concise, memorable verses and concrete examples of behaviour, ensuring that children absorb not abstract doctrines but behavioural models worthy of emulation. It is in this sense that the relation between

the student and their own conduct is enhanced: through imitation, learners are introduced to a tradition that regards education and moral cultivation as one and the same endeavour.

In summary, by building on students' relations with sound, characters, and discourse, Relation 4, *The Three Character Classic*, improves students' relation with their own conduct. Through short, exemplary stories, abstract names of virtues become concrete patterns of behaviour, enabling children to emulate and internalise them as their own code of conduct. In this way, the world represented by *The Three Character Classic* becomes a moral field in which the learner's own conduct matters.

Building on the student's relation with sound (Relation 1, Section 5.2.3.1), characters (Relation 2, Section 5.2.3.2), and discourse (Relation 3, Section 5.2.3.3), children are equipped with the ability to hear, read, and understand the text; this relation then carries the learner from understanding the text to enacting its values in daily life.

The discussion now turns to the fifth and final relation, From Text to World Order: Encoding Social Hierarchy through Mnemonic Structure, which examines how *The Three Character Classic* situates the learner within a larger structure of relations and cosmic order.

5.2.3.5. From Text to World Order: Encoding Social Hierarchy to be memorised and maintained through Mnemonic Structure

Having analysed the previous four relations, including what the author is assumed to have attempted to teach including traditional Chinese pronunciation, character structure, narrative and behavioural exemplars, this section turns, with further

selected excerpts from *The Three Character Classic*, how the book constructs a wider relation for the students, one that connects personal growth with the wider cosmic and social order. Now the discussion begins with analysing these example verses together.

5.2.3.5.1. Example Verses

Verse 15. 曰春夏，曰秋冬。 此四时， 运不穷。 This means there are Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, these four seasons of nature run alternately, the cycle of seasons, reflecting the order of climate.

Verse 17. 曰水火，木金土。 此五行，本乎数 。 This means the five basic elements Water, fire, wood, metal and earth are called the Five phases, and their interactions stem from the natural laws of heaven and earth.

Verse 13. 三才者，天地人。 三光者，日月星。 This means that the three fundamentals that support the existence of everything in the world, i.e. the basic elements that make up the world, refer to heaven (representing the laws of nature, i.e. the Way of Heaven), earth (representing the physical environment, i.e. the Way of the Earth), and human beings (representing the human subjective initiative, i.e. the Way of the Humanity); and the three major sources of light refer to the sun, the moon, and the stars.

Verse 14. 三纲者，君臣义。父子亲，夫妇顺。 This means that the three principles refer to: the way of propriety and righteousness should be followed between the ruler and the minister, the love of affection between father and son, and the harmony between husband and wife. From this, the author points out the three relationships that he considers most important: the relationship between ruler and subject, father and son, and husband and wife.

Verse 23. 高曾祖，父而身。 身而子，子而孙。 自子孙，至玄曾。 乃九族，人之倫。 This means from great-grandfather and grandfather to father to self; from self to son, son to grandson; from grandson to great-grandson, and great-grandson to continuity. This constitutes the nine clans, the most basic kinship relationships on earth.

Verse 24. 父子恩，夫妇从。 兄则友，弟则恭。 长幼序，友与朋。 君则敬，臣则忠。 This means that fathers and sons should live in harmony and husbands and wives should live in peace. Brothers should be friendly to one another, and younger siblings should be respectful. There should be a distinction between the young and the old, and loyalty and trust between friends. Rulers should respect their subjects, and subjects should be loyal to their rulers. This text illustrates the clear social hierarchy and the roles and responsibilities of rulers and subjects, fathers and sons, and husbands and wives.

According to the author, family relationships should be harmonious; father and son should be kind to one another; marriage should be balanced; the elder brother should be fair to the younger brother, and the younger brother should respect the elder brother; remember the hierarchy of authority while engaging with children and teenagers; when friends get along, they should be able to trust one another completely. Furthermore, the hierarchy relation should also be maintained, as those who serve the king will be loyal to him if he shows respect for his subjects (Zhao, 2011).

Based on the translation of these model verses, it can be seen that the overall order and framework of the discourse is very systematic, with the natural cycles (the four seasons) echoing the natural elements (the five elements), the celestial-human relationship corresponding to the structure of the universe, and then a large section on hierarchical kinship with specific status roles and modes of getting along.

5.2.3.5.2. What Relation is Improved?

Having previously offered children the opportunity to learn to speak, identify characters, write narratives, and learn from exemplary role models, the sample verses in this section now depict a scene encompassing the whole world. Heaven, earth, and man (Verse 13) constitute the three most fundamental elements of the world; the sun, moon, and stars (Verse 13) dominate the order of the three lights; the individual belongs to the family and thus inherits the lineage of the nine clans; and kings and subjects, fathers and sons, and husbands and wives follow the way of getting along with each other. Students are thus guided to recognise their position within multiple nested orders: as descendants in the family tree, as subjects in the polity, and as individuals in the three realms of heaven, earth, and man. *The Three Character Classic* thus warns students that spring should not be followed by winter, that the five phases should not be listed in vain, and that relatives and subjects should not be interchanged. By presenting these paradigms in parallel, *The Three Character Classic* guides children to understand that regularity and hierarchy constitute both the natural state of the world and the proper order of the social world. It can be seen that the relation between the student and their understanding of the world order is intended to be improved.

5.2.3.5.3. Into What?

At this stage, pupils gradually come to realise that their identity and responsibilities are partly defined by their position within these systems of order. Consequently, they gradually recognise that learning from the erudite masters is not an isolated pursuit for scientific knowledge but rather serves as the foundation for harmonising interpersonal relations and upholding the world order. In this way, *The Three Character Classic* imparts a Confucian cosmic–social hierarchy in children's memory, so they come to locate their own conduct with the order of with family, country, and

society; thus, the relation between the student and their understanding of world order is improved.

5.2.3.5.4. How is This Relation Improved?

The sample texts in this chapter of the book *Three Character Classic* convey the idea that compliance with the Confucian belief in the interconnectedness of human affairs and the balance of the universe is essential. As presented, the idea of '三才者，天地人' in Verse 13 of *The Three Character Classic* not only provides the reader with a picture of the things that exist in this world, but is also very familiar with the idea that comes from the 易经 *Book of Changes*' thinking that places man in the cosmic order and gives ethical legitimacy to the natural. In the *Book of Changes*, Ji Chang explained the principles of the creation as, 'in the past, the sages created the Book of Changes in order to comply with the nature of all things and the laws of nature (Jichang, n.d.). Thus, the Tao of Heaven is governed by yin and yang, the Tao of Earth is governed by softness and rigidity, and the Tao of Man is governed by benevolence and righteousness. By dividing the three talents of heaven and earth into yin and yang, *the Book of Changes* uses six lines (six pictures) to form the 64 hexagrams. This illustration reveals that human beings do not exist in isolation, but are part of everything in the universe, carrying the Way of Heaven and Earth. In this way, this cosmic order can refer to an extension of the relation of social hierarchy. Thus, it is believed that man (the ethical and social dimension) and nature (the way of heaven and earth) are not separate but are united in the same cosmic order. As a result, human behaviour must follow the laws of heaven and earth, that is, the way of heaven and the way of earth.

Next, the book uses Verse 14, 三纲者，君臣义。父子亲，夫妇顺 (which means 'The Three Fundamentals are about the righteousness of the ruler and his ministers. Father and son are kind, husband and wife are obedient) to explain the law among

human relations. The author links the emperor-subjects relationship to family relations, advocating that the relationship between the bureaucracy should be expressed as natural and appropriate as that between human members, and should be harmonious and coordinated, like family affection. Subjects should respect and obey the emperor just like young children should respect and obey their elder brothers and father; in this way, *The Three Character Classics* emphasise the concept of the clan's lineage and ritual order in which each role carries its own obligations.

Furthermore, the book ties the human relation in Verse 14, 三纲者，君臣义。父子亲，夫妇顺 (which means The Three Fundamentals are about the righteousness of the ruler and his ministers. Father and son are kind, husband and wife are obedient) with the Five Virtues in Verse 18 曰仁义，礼智信。此五常，不容紊。 (which means benevolence, righteousness, ritual propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness are five virtues. These five norms are not to be disturbed). The author designed these verses together, suggesting that the ethical norms in these two verses are closely connected and not made up by people, but rather derived from natural law and possessing natural legitimacy, because human relations are designed by nature. Human conduct that goes against ethics (for example, unfilial piety and injustice) is seen as disrupting the harmony of the universe and leading to natural and man-made disasters (earthquakes and floods were often interpreted by the ancients as punishment from heaven, thereby conferring powerful authority on those moral rules). By incorporating people relations into the cosmic order, ethical behaviour is made to be not only a social requirement, but also a manifestation of conformity to nature, thus enhancing the authority and inevitability of ethics, and laying the foundation of public opinion for seeing their place among the masses of the people and conforming to nature and social arrangements.

As these three verses show, the author covers a vast amount of knowledge in a remarkably concise text. This includes but is not limited to the four seasons, the Five

virtues, and the proper roles that should be observed between sovereign and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elders and juniors, and friends.

In the original text of *The Three Character Classic*, the author did not attempt to explain the order of the world through long-winded speech, but rather condensed the order of nature, the universe, the family and society into short, rhythmic units for students of all ages to learn. Zhang (2013) has said that, in order to achieve a basic level of fluency in reading and writing, pupils must master at least two thousand commonly used words within a year or slightly longer. Consequently, it is highly likely that pupils will not be able to fully understand many of these characters within this limited timeframe (and teachers may even simply choose not to explain them), so they are left with no choice but to learn them by rote. The fact that children can recite these words and texts as fixed sequences even before they fully grasp their deeper implications is largely due to *The Three Character Classic*'s concise, rhyming linguistic structure. Such introductory texts are catchy and easy for children to read aloud and memorise; they do not find them particularly difficult or daunting (Zhang, 2013). In this sense, as for *The Three Character Classic*, memorisation is not only a technique for language learning, but also a means through which a particular social and cosmic order is preserved in the learner's mind.

5.2.3.5.5. Why Does this Relation Need to Be Improved?

The question needs to be addressed here is: why does this relation need to be improved? That is to say, why should pupils be taught to understand the orders within the society and world depicted in the books? The need to improve this relation can be understood within the broader concerns of Confucianism, namely its emphasis on moral virtues such as benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and integrity, as well as the ideal of harmonious correspondence among the three realms of heaven, earth, and humanity. As discussed in Section 5.2.3.4.5, these definitions of virtue

delineate the nature of man and the extent of his self-interest, which, in essence, constitute the manner in which he conducts his dealings with others. Therefore, these core concepts of Confucianism serve both as a moral code for interacting with others in the world and as a cornerstone for building a harmonious society. Such qualities teach people how to maintain moral integrity in a complex and changing society and how to strike a balance between personal interests and social responsibilities (Xu, 2025).

Through the study and practice of Confucianism, individuals can deepen their understanding of the social order, thereby facilitating the effective integration of personal development goals with the macro goals of the established hierarchy. Consequently, foundational education must not merely impart fragmented knowledge but also guide children toward understanding a world order that is clear, memorable, and controllable. It could be assumed, then, that the authors of *The Three Character Classic* sought not only to teach children to read, recite, and utilise classical Chinese in examinations, but ultimately to situate education within an understanding of the society's structure and the principles governing political stability in ancient China.

In summary, Relation 5 shows how *The Three Character Classic* improves the learner's relation to world order. Building on the learner's relations to sound, characters, compressed discourse, and moral conduct, the text finally situates the child within a wider Confucian order of nature, family, society, and moral responsibility. At this stage, the world represented by *The Three Character Classic* becomes a memorised cosmic and social order. The child is not only taught to recite, read, understand, and imitate; they are also taught to locate themselves within a network of relations that must be maintained.

This concludes the analysis of the five improvable relations identified in Chapter 5, and lays the groundwork for the comparative analysis in Chapter 6.

5.3. Conclusion

In Chapter 5, by examining the historical and cultural context, the educational institutions and ideological foundations of *The Three Character Classic*, and by applying the 5W1H framework to analyse its pedagogical elements, this chapter seeks to explore the educational intentions embedded within this book.

First, in the contextual discussion in Section 5.1, this thesis examines the development of ancient Chinese pedagogy, the imperial examination system, the roles of public and private schools, and the influence of Confucian philosophy. These contextual backgrounds demonstrate that the circumstances surrounding the composition and use of *The Three Character Classic* are closely linked to Confucian thought, and that its purpose lay within an educational culture oriented towards preparation for the imperial examinations.

Subsequently, in Section 5.2, in line with the analytical framework presented in Chapter 4, five relations, including the relation between students and phonological entry, the relation between students and lexical/character units, the relation between students and discourse use, the relation between students and their actions, and the relation between students and the world/society, are selected from among the many possible educational intentions, to explore the key educational intentions contained within *The Three Character Classic*.

More specifically, of these five relations, the first three highlight the educational role of *The Three Character Classic* in language skills such as basic pronunciation, vocabulary, and text reading and writing. Through its three-syllable rhythmic structure, repeated recitation and rhyme schemes, the text helps learners become familiar with phonological patterns and develop fluent pronunciation skills. Afterwards, the educational process extends to pronunciation, Chinese characters, and vocabulary. Under the teacher's guidance, pupils are introduced to meaningful

vocabulary units and gradually acquire the structure of Chinese characters. Building on the improvements in the first two relations, the text of *The Three Character Classic* further guides learners in engaging with cultural narratives.

Based on the first three relations, the educator shifts the centre of learning to help students learn to establish role models for their own actions and regulate their own daily actions. Through moral exemplar stories and normative teachings, *The Three Character Classic* connects students to filial piety, social conformity, benevolence, and related virtues. In other words, the study of this book focuses on language skills, but it also guides moral action. Further, the fifth relation places students within a broader framework: namely, the world order presented in this book. Within this world order, various relationships intertwine, including those between individuals, between individuals and their families, between individuals and the country, and between individuals and society. Within the hierarchical systems of family and society described in *The Three Character Classic*, students learn to understand their place within the family, society, and the universe, and to conform to the order of the world.

In summary, the analysis in Chapter 5 shows that *The Three Character Classic* can be used not only to develop language skills such as pronunciation, vocabulary and text reading and writing, but also to shape pupils' understanding of moral conduct, social relationships, and the cosmic and social order. Then, educators who use this book can improve children's understanding of sounds, characters and texts, but also use it to help shape their behavioural norms, enabling them to learn and consolidate their existing social status and stability within the context of social and cosmic order.

From Mollenhauer's perspective, these five relations together constitute a highly ordered world for the children. In this world, children are introduced to a fixed pattern of speaking and writing, action is to be modelled by approved historical figures, and the relations between people are presented as given, authoritative, and to be internalised. In other words, the book does not merely present the world as an object

of knowledge; it inducts the child into a world already ordered and asks the child to take up a place within it. RQ 1.1 has now been answered for both texts; further discussion will lead to the answers to RQ 1.2 and RQ 1.3.

Next, since Chapters 4 and 5 have now analysed five relations in *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, respectively, these will be used as the core of the comparative analysis in the forthcoming Chapter 6. In Chapter 6, this thesis synthesises the findings regarding these relations: language pronunciation, word structure, the use of texts, individual action, and the understanding of the world order. The main aim is to compare the two books to explore the common educational concerns they share and to highlight their significant differences and the possible reasons for them. The discussion now moves to the comparison and discussion of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* in Chapter 6.

6. Comparison and Discussion

In the preceding Chapters 4 and 5, this thesis examined the historical and cultural contexts of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, alongside their pedagogical elements, with the designed 5W1H analytical framework. This chapter proceeds to the comparative phase of this research, using Freiberger's fivefold comparative method (as introduced in Chapter 3) as a lens to examine the similarities and differences between the two selected books to answer RQ 1.2 and to begin developing RQ 1.3.

As the historical and spatial background answers the question of when and where the two books were utilised, the contextual discussion is not compared separately but is used to explain the similarities and differences that emerge from the five relations. Consequently, the comparative analysis in this chapter is based on the five relations discussed in the preceding Chapters 4 and 5 under the question of what to educate.

This chapter is divided into two sections: the first part outlines the structural design for comparison and analysis, whilst the second part presents a specific comparative analysis of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*. I first introduce how the structure for comparison and discussion is developed.

6.1. Structure of Comparison and Discussion

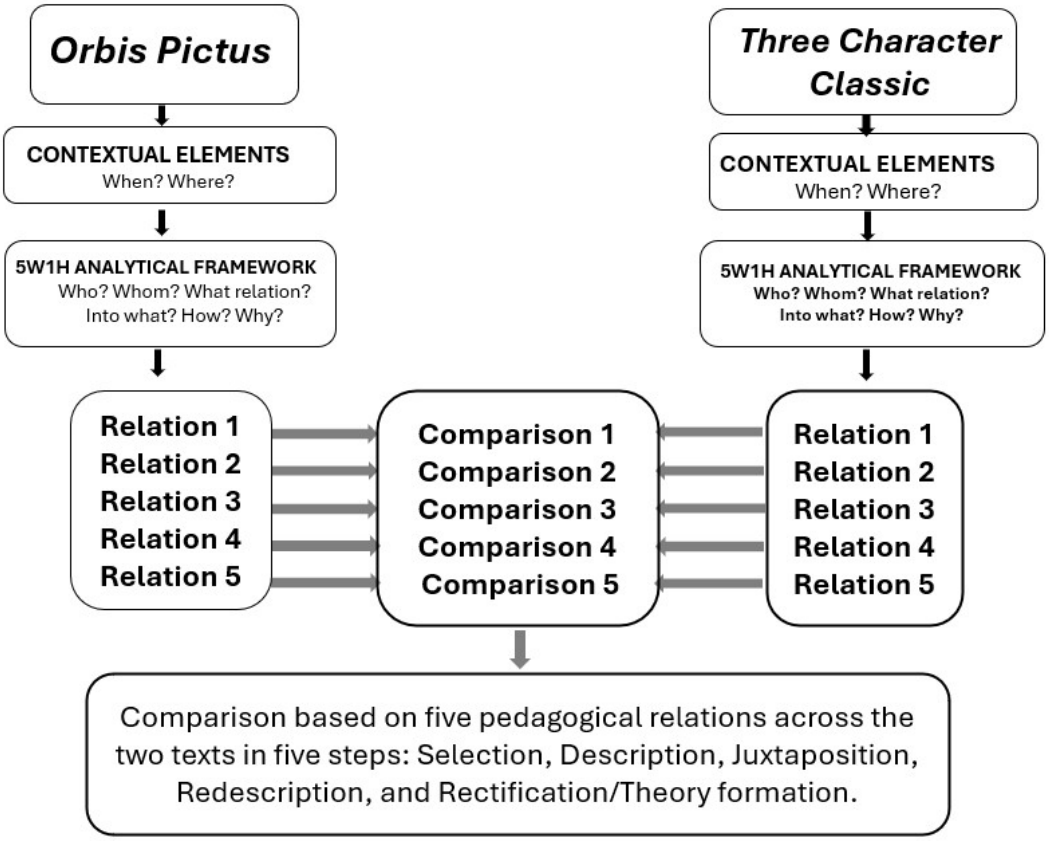


Figure 41: Structure of the comparative analysis based on the five pedagogical relations. Author-generated.

Based on the discussion of the five improvable relations discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, this section summarises each relation and derives a title for comparison purposes (see Figure 41) as follows:

Comparison 1: Students and symbol-sound connection, which draws on Relation 1 in *Orbis Pictus* (From pictures to alphabet: linking symbols and the sounds through familiar experiences) and Relation 1 in *Three Character Classic* (From the Three-Character Line to Fluent Recitation: Establishing Sound Patterns through Rhythm and Rhyme).

Comparison 2: Students and words, which draws on Relation 2 in *Orbis Pictus* (From scenes to vocabulary: identifying and naming objects in the world) and Relation 2 in *The Three Character Classic* (From Strokes to Characters: Acquiring Meaning through Character Form and Structure).

Comparison 3: Students and discourse, which draws on Relation 3 in *Orbis Pictus* (From Words to Discourse: Communicating Ideas and Narratives) and Relation 3 in *The Three Character Classic* (From Words to Discourse: Communicating Ideas through Compressed Historical Narratives).

Comparison 4: Students and action, which draws on Relation 4 in *Orbis Pictus* (From Right Knowing to Right Doing: Forming Judgement through Senses, Reason, and Virtue), and Relation 4 in *The Three Character Classic* (From Language Learning to Ethical Action: Internalising Moral Principles through Imitation).

Comparison 5: Students and the world/society, which draws on Relation 5 in *Orbis Pictus* (From the Book Structure to the World Framework: Understanding Hierarchy and Divine Order) and Relation 5 in *The Three Character Classic* (From Text to World Order: Encoding Social Hierarchy to be memorised and maintained through Mnemonic Structure).

As demonstrated by the respective analyses in Chapters 4 and 5, and by the initial comparison of each heading in the above paragraphs, it could be inferred that the five relations show a certain progressive trend, wherein each subsequent relation presupposes the preceding one. This characteristic will be further elaborated upon in subsequent discussions. This research adopts these five sequential relations to interpret *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, not to advocate that the study of these two books must strictly follow this path, but rather to present it as an analytical framework for understanding both books.

Each relation is discussed in the order of Freiberger's five-fold comparative method, starting with a brief summary (Description) of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*'s sample chapters (Selection) analysed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, followed by a comparison of the similarities and differences between the two books (Juxtaposition), and finally bringing up clarification and reflection that have emerged from this comparative analysis of the Relation (Redescription and Rectification[35]).

It is worth emphasising again that, as stated earlier (Section 3.8), this study does not involve comparing the correctness of content. Instead, it focuses on how each book conceives of elementary education, how it organises the sequence of content, and the intentions and reasons behind it. Furthermore, because of fundamental differences in the language systems, this comparative analysis examines how each different tradition and culture constructs language and school education. For instance, the illustrations that combine the pictures and texts in *Orbis Pictus* and the rhyming triplets in *The Three Character Classic* do not employ strictly identical strategies, but both can be analysed as functional mechanisms designed to aid understanding and memory. The discussion now proceeds to the second part of the comparative analysis of these five relations.

[35] The redescriptions and rectifications used here in this chapter do not seek to pass judgment on the right or wrong of the texts or to correct pedagogical errors. Rather, by juxtaposing the similarities and differences between the two texts, they aim to clarify and reflect upon the divergences revealed through comparison, thereby identifying the rational causes within each tradition.

6.2. Pedagogical Comparison Based on the Five Relations

In the following sections, this research analyses the similarities and differences between these two books with respect to each of the 5 comparisons discussed in Section 6.1, proceeding in the order of those comparisons.

6.2.1. Comparison 1: Students and Symbol-sound Connection

The analysis of this relation focuses on comparing the similarities and differences between *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* in improving students and their relation with the pronunciation of the target language. The similarity is that both books attempt to teach students the pronunciation of the target language. The difference is that in *Orbis Pictus*, Comenius uses pictures of animals and onomatopoeia to show the pronunciation of each letter of the language, with the intention of giving the students a visual and auditory representation of the sounds of the letters so that they can grasp the sounds of the letters faster and more accurately, taking into account their experiences with animals they have seen before. The author of *The Three Character Classic* chooses to show students how the language is pronounced using a rhythmic three-character line. This pattern of regularly pronounced three-letter words, combined with the teacher's phonetic demonstrations, may help students identify standards and pronunciation patterns, even without prior experience. In this section, I will analyse these two books in terms of phonics instruction and draw inferences about the authors' likely intentions and the reasons behind them.

6.2.1.1. Relation 1 in *Orbis Pictus*

In *Orbis Pictus*, Comenius presents a method for engaging in the understanding and learning of language phonetics through visual and auditory participation, combining letters of the alphabet with images of real animals to teach children to recognise letters and their corresponding sounds, as discussed in Sec 4.2.3. Specifically, Comenius devised a way of representing the alphabet, with each row labelled from left to right according to the level of familiarity of the pupils with the illustration of the animal they were supposed to recognise, the name of that animal, the animal's call, and the letter that sounded similar to that call. Each letter is equally formatted, and in this way, Comenius systematically introduces children to the entire alphabet. This image-name-sound-letter tetrad strengthens the connection between students' visual recall of objects and written words and, more importantly, emphasises the sounds each letter represents.

The point of this approach is that it starts from the most basic sensory perception and is based on the sounds of animals in the world that the pupils can see every day as the basis for the pronunciation of the sounds, which are illustrated and printed in the book and used to assist in the teaching and learning process. By awakening students' memories of real-world creatures and their calls that they actually see or hear, they eliminate the unfamiliarity of an unknown language and more quickly and autonomously correlate their memories with the phonics they are learning, thereby educating them about the phonological structure of the language. In addition, phonics in *Orbis Pictus* goes beyond the introduction of individual letters, because it lays the foundation for the development of the language as a whole. Rather than simply memorising a string of letters or symbols, it is vital for children to be able to spell words and then right through to ensure the delivery of clear and accurate speech.

6.2.1.2. Relation 1 in *The Three Character Classic*

In *The Three Character Classic*, there is a different set of knowledge points than *Orbis Pictus,* when teaching students to study traditional Chinese. As mentioned above, *Orbis Pictus* seems to focus on improving students' understanding of the language's phonetics by incorporating the experiences of animals they have seen and heard, while *The Three Character Classic* uses short, rhythmic phrases that students can quickly pick up and memorise. The authors of *The Three Character Classic* have integrated the study of the language's phonological components with the structure of pupils' memorisation, which could be used to help children learn the sounds of individual words.

The Three Character Classic is designed according to the rule of every three characters in a sentence, with each sentence containing a rhythmic repetition of the rhyme, which helps students to quickly grasp the rhythmicity of pronunciation when they are first introduced to the traditional Chinese language, thus facilitating quicker and easier learning and memorisation. By using Chinese sound patterns (both rhythmic and tonal) as a central part of the learning process, this triplet pattern acts like music, making it easier for children to remember the text. At the same time, this pattern reinforces children's phonological awareness by exposing them repeatedly to words with similar tonal patterns and syllable structures.

Rhythm and tone could be considered the most obvious structural features of *The Three Character Classic*. Each sentence in the book manages to achieve the characteristics of clear phonetics for individual characters and distinct rhythm for each sentence, a format that is likely to be designed to encourage children's memorisation through the use of repetition and musicality. This emphasis on pronunciation is perhaps the most important aspect of the learning process, as it

allows children to absorb the phonological patterns of the characters and their respective readings in an aurally oriented way at the beginning of their learning.

Having gained some insight into the relationship between each of the two books in relation to improving pupils' understanding of the sounds of language, the discussion now analyse this relationship from a comparative perspective, highlighting the similarities and differences between the two texts in terms of phonological understanding.

6.2.1.3. Similarities

Based on the preliminary analysis of the phonics teaching designs for the two books, *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic,* although on the surface one employs an alphabet-based approach while the other focuses on Chinese characters, there could be a deeper educational logic that connects them. In this section, I shall explore the observable similarities between these two texts.

The first commonality between *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* is that both treat sound learning as a primary teaching focus, regarding it as the core content to be imparted to pupils first in early literacy education. This approach is understandable, for the primary and most practical objective in learning any language is typically to use it for communication and interaction. Consequently, clear and accurate pronunciation is of paramount importance.

The second similarity between these two books in their teaching of phonics is that both authors have meticulously designed their approaches, opting for a structured, systematic method to introduce the language's phonological system. This ensures that children grasp the fundamental elements of reading and speaking.

The third similarity lies in the authors' consideration of the characteristics and receptivity of their student audience (predominantly children). In designing content

and layout, they deliberately link relatively abstract phonetic elements (letter sounds, Chinese character sounds, linguistic rhythm) to more concrete, perceptible forms (animal sounds/images, rhythmic patterns). This approach facilitates children's comprehension and retention.

6.2.1.4. Differences

First, despite these similarities, the two books differ in their approaches to phonological awareness. Whilst both aim to cultivate children's phonological awareness, their teaching methodologies are fundamentally distinct. As the preceding analysis demonstrates, *Orbis Pictus* focuses on helping children grasp the correspondence between letters and sounds, whereas *The Three Character Classic* is designed to instruct pupils in syllable pronunciation and tonal variations. In *Orbis Pictus*, the author binds sound to objects that can be directly observed or perceived in the world. When pupils see a letter, they recall the corresponding animal's cry; conversely, when they hear an animal's cry, they recall that a letter in the language they are learning has a similar sound.

In *The Three Character Classic*, the educator emphasises the sound of language within its inherent rhythmic structure. This relies on immersing pupils in extensive, repetitive recitation, allowing their oral muscles and auditory systems to familiarise themselves with and memorise specific rhythmic patterns, thereby mastering the correct pronunciation of each character. This method of textual arrangement traces back to the Tang Dynasty tradition of teaching children to chant poetry, exemplified by works such as Thousand Family Poems and Child Prodigy Poems. It not only facilitates recitation but also stimulates children's interest in learning (Zheng, 2017). Among the three genres of rhymed texts used in children's educational materials, this form is among the most popular with young readers and is widely recited. The other two genres are poetry and prose (Zheng, 2017); due to space constraints, this point is not

elaborate further here. Compared with contemporaries in early childhood education, such as the Four-Character Classic and the Thousand Character Classic, *The Three Character Classic* (with its entirely three-character lines) features a straightforward, lucid structure. Its accessible language facilitates children's recitation and memorisation, aligning perfectly with the characteristics of early childhood education[36].

Secondly, the responsibilities of teachers also differ somewhat. In *Orbis Pictus*, one can infer that the teacher's role is to assist pupils in recognising letters and their pronunciations. This is achieved by linking letter sounds to animal calls in the natural world, for instance, by imitating animal cries to trigger pupils' memories. Such teachers act as 'midwives' to knowledge, facilitating pupils' acquisition rather than being the knowledge itself, guiding pupils to explore knowledge independently. Within the linguistic teaching environment of *The Three Character Classic*, however, the teacher's demonstration of a character's Chinese pronunciation and tonal variations constitutes the student's first and often decisive exposure to that sound. Should the teacher possess a dialect or peculiar pronunciation, the student may even learn this variant pronunciation. In essence, the teacher's knowledge inevitably shapes the knowledge itself; the teacher is the vessel of knowledge.

[36] Apart from rhyming texts composed of three, four, or five characters specifically for children or beginners, writing manuals tailored for adults also emerged during this period. Compared to the aforementioned elementary textbooks, such works were better suited for adults possessing a certain foundation of knowledge. Their prose was more intricate, presenting considerable comprehension difficulties for children. An example is Lü Zuxian's Shao Yi Wai Zhuan. In compiling this work, the author drew extensively from Confucian classics, scholarly anthologies, and official historical records, which constituted a significant portion of the content. The text is overly philosophical throughout, featuring convoluted phrasing that renders it unsuitable as a recitation manual for children or beginners (Zheng, 2017).

6.2.1.5. Reflection and Conclusion

Through the above comparison of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* in improving students' phonological entry of a target language, it can be observed that both texts regard phonological teaching as a core component of early education, emphasising the foundational role of accurate pronunciation in language education. Despite differing pedagogical approaches, both endeavour to establish children's initial grasp of the target language's phonological system. *Orbis Pictus* employs onomatopoeia to link letter sounds with children's existing life experiences (such as animal calls), emphasising a natural progression from sensory memories to linguistic symbols. Conversely, *The Three Character Classic* utilises structured texts with rhythmic patterns to guide pupils in mastering Chinese syllables and tone patterns through repeated recitation, relying on the teacher's phonological demonstration and the pupils' imitative memorisation.

One substantial reason for this distinction in phonological teaching methods lies in the differences between the phonological units of the two language systems. *Orbis Pictus* primarily educates at the level of letters and phonemes, whereas *The Three Character Classic* focuses on syllables within rhythmic and tonal patterns.

In *Orbis Pictus*, the pronunciation of a word is largely determined by the combination of the individual letter sounds within that word. These letters (or combinations of letters) correspond to phonemes (the smallest units of sound in a language), which make up syllables, which in turn make up words, thus forming the basic structure of a word (Shei, 2014). In English (or other European language families), syllables are intermediate structures between sounds and words. For example, the word 'ordinary' consists of four syllables – /ˈɔːdɪnəri/ – All of these syllables are meaningless when they stand alone (Shei, 2014, p. 2). Therefore, for the initial stage of phonetic instruction using *Orbis Pictus* (particularly when teaching beginners), the most

expedient approach is to first establish the correspondence between letters and their sounds, that is, to teach letters alongside their corresponding phonetic elements. Comenius' method of associating animal cries with letter sounds precisely links abstract phonemes to concrete, visible linguistic elements, exemplifying such a correspondence approach.

In Chinese, however, the language is a typical monosyllabic morpheme-based system. As a logographic writing system, Chinese lacks direct correspondence with the phonetic symbols commonly used in Western languages (Arcodia & Basciano, 2021). The syllable is a fundamental concept in the Chinese language, and each syllable can stand alone as a meaningful unit. For example, 电脑 'computer' consists of two characters, 电 /tjɛn/ 'electric' and 脑 /naʊ/ 'brain'; each character is exactly one syllable long and has its own meaning (Shei, 2014, p.2). Therefore, each syllable in Chinese constitutes a 'meaningful building block'. They either bear semantic functions independently or combine with other syllables to form larger units of meaning (Arcodia & Basciano, 2021).

Therefore, the core task in early Chinese phonetic learning is not the analysis and combination of phonemes, but rather the mastery of syllable pronunciation as a whole (including initials, finals, and tones) alongside individual phonemes, whilst becoming accustomed to the rhythmic patterns of syllable combinations (Zhang & Zhang, 2022). For instance, the rhythmic patterns of three-character phrases in *The Three Character Classic* predominantly follow the structure AA pause B or A pause BB (Zhang & Zhang, 2022). The three-character verses of *The Three Character Classic*, with their meticulous attention to rhyme, serve precisely to train pupils in the holistic comprehension and memorisation of Chinese syllables, tones, and the rhythmic cadence of sentences.

It is worth mentioning that although classical Chinese of the Confucian school, which served as the sole official written language from the reign of Emperor Wu of Han

through to the Qing dynasty (141 BCE-early 20th century) (as discussed in Chapter 5), its pronunciation has never been made uniform and standardised throughout the country. This was due to the absence of a unified, easily teachable phonological system. Consequently, numerous regional dialects persisted across the land (Arcodia & Basciano, 2021). Subsequently, by the Song, Ming, and Qing dynasties (960-1911), when *The Three Character Classic* became popular, China was still at a stage where oral and written language did not coincide. As mentioned in Chapter 5, in actual teaching practice, teachers across different regions will read using their own dialectal accents. Even if teachers possess dialectal features, pupils lack the discernment to distinguish them and fully absorb them. As a result, students from different dialectal backgrounds will be educated with distinct pronunciations, and during recitation in the academy, pupils will employ their teacher's dialect. Commonly, people spoke a wide variety of vastly different dialects or local vernaculars, while in writing they employed the standardised classical Chinese of the Confucian school.

Regarding specific teaching methods, since the pinyin system emerged only after the 20th century, ancient China primarily used written characters to indicate pronunciation (Wang & Sun, 2015). Among these, the Fanqie method stood as the most renowned oral phonological annotation technique from the Eastern Han dynasty through to the late Qing period (Wang & Sun, 2015). The principle involves taking the initial consonant from the first familiar Chinese character and the vowel and tone from the second, then combining these elements to form the pronunciation of a third, unfamiliar character[37]. The prerequisite for employing this method is that

[37] To assist in understanding, Wang & Sun presented an illustration of the Fanqie Method in English, that is, the pronunciation of 'Song' equals S (of 'so') + Ong (of 'long'). Likewise, the Chinese character

pupils possess a certain level of literacy to aid in phonetic composition; however, in practice, this proves unsuitable for beginners and children.

Overall, although *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* adopt very different methods and principles in improving students' pronunciation skills, they both successfully provide children with an effective introduction to phonology in their respective cultural contexts. This difference should not be interpreted as a simple case of superiority or inferiority but rather as a natural reflection of different language systems, educational traditions and cultural values in educational practice. Both traditions ensure the linguistic nature of the literacy process through different mechanisms. *Orbis Pictus* educates phonological input through predefined correspondences between letters and sounds. *The Three Character Classic*, in contrast, follows the teacher's verbal demonstrations and guides pronunciation through rhythmic repetition and tonal patterns. Once pupils have gained a foundational understanding of the language's phonological rules, they proceed to learn the composition and writing of individual characters (vocabulary words). This constitutes a comparison of the two books based on the second relation, which will be explored in subsequent chapters.

6.2.2. Comparison 2: Students and Words

The analysis of this relation focuses on comparing the similarities and differences between *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* in teaching students to acquire lexical/character units (words/characters) and to reproduce them in writing in this

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东 can be read as Dong which equals D (of 'De 德') + Ong (of 'Hong 红'), where De 德 offers 东's initial consonant, and 红 offers 东's final and tone (Wang & Sun, 2015, p. 5).

language. In this section, this thesis analyses these two books from the perspective of literacy teaching and endeavour to explore the authors' respective views on literacy instruction and the reasons behind them.

6.2.2.1. Relation 2 in *Orbis Pictus*

In the second relationship, concerning the study of words, Section 4.2.3.2.1 selects sections such as 'Potherbs' and 'Corn' to elucidate how to instruct pupils in learning vocabulary and recognising corresponding objects. During the learning process, pupils begin with the illustrations in *Orbis Pictus*, annotating the characteristics, qualities, and functions of depicted objects through a combination of numbered references and linguistic descriptions. This approach guides them to focus on these essential attributes. For instance, flowers symbolise beauty and elegance, and corn represents nutritional and agricultural labour. In this way, pupils not only expand their vocabulary but also enhance their ability to name and recognise objects. By associating images with textual labels, they transition from visual perception of objects (image) to language awareness (naming), enabling them to name, categorise, and describe everyday items. Subsequently, the relation between the pupils and the vocabulary of the target language is improved.

6.2.2.2. Relation 2 in *The Three Character Classic*

This thesis has previously analysed, in the example verses of Section 5.2.3.2.1, how the author and contemporary teachers employed *The Three Character Classic* to teach pupils traditional Chinese characters. At this stage, pupils no longer confined themselves to learning the pronunciation of traditional Chinese characters but rather regarded them as meaningful symbols. When guiding children in learning vocabulary from the text, teachers need to adapt their teaching strategies to pupils' ages and characteristics. When teaching individual vocabulary items, instruction must encompass multiple dimensions, including pronunciation, stroke order, and lexical

meaning. Crucially, teachers can guide pupils to deduce a character's full meaning by examining its structural components and semantic elements. During character decomposition exercises, this approach serves as an effective cue or foundation for understanding lexical meaning. For instance, the character '孝' (filial piety), as demonstrated in the sample chapter, conveys its core meaning through the image of supporting an elderly figure, while '朋' (friend) depicts two individuals sharing common interests becoming close companions. After grasping the character structure, pupils can practise copying under teacher guidance. Thus, by studying character composition, the relation between students and their comprehension of Chinese vocabulary (character structure and meaning) is improved.

6.2.2.3. Similarities

The sections above present my preliminary understanding of the instructional design in *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*. Though the focus is on vocabulary teaching while the other is on Chinese character instruction, there is a deeper educational logic that connects them. This section explores the observable similarities between these two texts.

Within this pedagogical framework, the first commonality between *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* lies in their shared emphasis on character recognition as a foundational component of literacy instruction. Both treat the study of written forms as a core element to be imparted to pupils in the earliest stages of reading and writing education. This approach is entirely reasonable, for the primary and most practical objective in learning any language is invariably to communicate through it. Consequently, the ability to accurately identify and write characters is very important.

The second similarity between these two textbooks is that the authors have carefully designed a system that places words in context rather than presenting them in isolation. For instance, in the sample chapters of *Orbis Pictus*, the word 'flower' is

introduced to students with a paragraph rich in detail and visual imagery (all kinds of flowers in different sizes and types, such as lilies and roses). While in *The Three Character Classic*, the word '从 cóng' is explained from its graphic form (one person follows another) together with its meaning within phrases and entire sentences (this following particularly refers to a wife's dependence upon and following of her husband). From these examples, it can be seen that neither author adopts an isolated, mechanical approach to teaching individual words within a language. Instead, they choose to embed words within annotations or contextual settings, thereby offering pupils multifaceted interpretations. This ensures children learn vocabulary while simultaneously learning how to understand within structures.

6.2.2.4. Differences

Having noted the two similarities above, *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* also exhibit numerous differences in their approaches to teaching character recognition and writing. For instance, the most obvious distinction lies in the differing methodologies employed by the authors of these two texts.

In *Orbis Pictus*, Comenius devised images and nomenclature of daily activities and basic things in the world to stimulate and awaken the student's senses in all directions for educational purposes. All these things (visible or invisible) have been named with nomenclatures as the title and the whole meaning of the thing. Learners first see a detailed illustration of familiar, tangible objects or activities. The objects in the picture are numbered logically, creating an orderly connection between the visual elements and their corresponding descriptions, forming a learning mechanism that approximates a pointing-out-based definition. The entire book follows this method, in which numbers and descriptions correspond to each other to explain the particular word, and the meaning of the new word is pointed out directly to the student.

In *The Three Character Classic*, teachers can teach the structure of individual characters by first teaching the character's shape, breaking it down into components that are easy to understand, then teaching the character's overall shape and the rules for writing it. Since the earliest scripts are the closest to pictures and can be used to provide students with a more intuitive understanding of what they represent, it is possible to demonstrate and explain the character from the oracle bone version of the word first and then explain the exact writing rules of the current version of the word. After understanding the character's structure, students can copy it and learn to write it with the teacher's guidance. The distinction between this teaching approach and the second difference to be discussed next is also directly related.

Secondly, the linguistic nature of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* is fundamentally distinct. This difference has led to distinct educational approaches in teaching with the two books and variations in how pupils comprehend the vocabulary of the two books, respectively.

For *Orbis Pictus*, whether in its earliest edition that combined German and Latin, subsequent English and Latin versions, or the author Comenius's native language, Czech, the writing system employed the Latin alphabet. The fundamental unit of writing is the letter, whose primary function is to indicate pronunciation. Words in *Orbis Pictus* were primarily constructed from combinations of letters with distinct pronunciations. Once the pronunciation of individual letters was mastered, the pronunciation of entire words was largely acquired. For instance, having learnt the pronunciation of 'Aa' as described in Relation 1 in Chapter 4, pupils studying the word 'Apple' would immediately recall that the initial letter's sound resembles the caw of a crow. Consequently, they would recognise that the first syllable of this word should begin with 'ah' but not have many clues about this word's meaning if they just see this word for the first time.

By comparison, in *The Three Character Classic*, the textual units of *The Three Character Classic* are individual Chinese characters. Each character typically corresponds to a single syllable or a single morpheme and, in many cases, incorporates component parts that provide clues to its meaning. When a student encounters the character for the first time, they are highly likely to be able to guess its meaning. For example, in Chapter 5, this thesis introduced the form '孝', which depicts an old person leaning against a younger person. For pupils encountering this character for the first time, whilst they may not grasp its precise meaning, they ought to be able to deduce that it relates to elders and children and may interpret it as signifying respect or filial piety.

6.2.2.5. Clarification and Reflection

By examining the similarities and differences between *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* in terms of improving students' word study and vocabulary, it is found that the two textbooks adopt different educational methods and principles, even though they both endeavour to establish a link between the form of words and their meanings. The underlying reason is the difference in the definitions of the basic unit of words between the two textbooks, as well as differences in the writing systems of the two traditional cultures.

Firstly, the conceptualisation of morphemes in alphabetic languages such as English differs from that in Chinese[38]. In English, morphemes are defined solely by their

[38] Regarding the Chinese language, the term 'Chines' as a translation in English is actually rather ambiguous. At the same time, other terms that similarly attempt to refer to the Chinese language include 汉语 Hanyu、华语 Huayu、国语 Guoyu 等 (Arcodia & Basciano, 2021, p.9). As the primary objective of this thesis is not to conduct an in-depth exploration of Chinese from a linguistic perspective,

meaning, regardless of the number of syllables they contain (Shei, 2014). The length of morphemes in English can extend to ‘paradise’ (three syllables) or be as short as ‘fox’ (one syllable). In Chinese, approximately 400 usable syllables, when annotated with tones and placed within appropriate contexts, can each constitute a unit of meaning (Shei, 2014).

Furthermore, in Chinese, each character corresponds precisely to a syllable with a tone and has a specific meaning. The traditionally accepted principles of Chinese character formation include pictographic Chinese characters, phonetic loan characters, and composite characters with both sound and meaning (Shei, 2014). The latter two categories bear little relevance to this thesis, so, because of word count constraints, they shall not be elaborated upon here. Traditional pictographic Chinese characters are those whose forms visually resemble the concepts they express (Shei, 2014). For instance, the character ‘山’ (mountain) does indeed resemble three peaks standing side by side. The character ‘羊’ (sheep) originates from the oracle bone script, the earliest attested form of Chinese writing, and its form resembles a sheep's head. In Chapter 5 of this thesis, similar illustrations of the evolution of character forms from the oracle bone script stage are used to analyse the relationship between character form and meaning in the education of children in Chinese characters as presented in *The Three Character Classic*.

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and in order to maintain consistency in terminology, the Chinese language studied by the pupils in the *Three Character Classic* shall be referred to as ‘Chinese’. In fact, this term more accurately refers to the standard written language uniformly employed in all official documents, imperial examinations, historical and literary works, and correspondence from the Song Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty (960–1912), namely orthodox literary Chinese.

Apart from the differing correspondences between morphemes and syllables and their respective characters, the writing systems employed in *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* are entirely distinct. Unlike English, which uses letters to form words, the Chinese writing system does not use letters. Instead, it consists of strokes (the strokes themselves are neither meaningful nor pronounced) used to construct Chinese characters (Zhang & Zhang, 2022). Consequently, Chinese characters exhibit an internal structure that is fundamentally different from that of English words. Apart from differences in structural components, there is no direct correspondence between strokes and pronunciation in Chinese characters, as in English (and other languages composed of letters) (Zhang & Zhang, 2022). That is to say, the graphic features of Chinese characters do not reflect their pronunciation in the same way as letters do in English-type alphabetic languages. This constitutes the most significant distinction between English-type alphabetic languages and the Chinese writing system.

The above differences provide some of the reasons for judging the typological differences between the texts of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, and from them, it can be deduced that the pedagogical methods are fundamentally different. In Chapters 4 and 5 above, this thesis has elaborated on the corresponding differences in teaching methods. Chapter 5 of this thesis focuses on analysing the decomposition of Chinese characters into recognisable components as an effective method for reducing learning difficulty for students. However, modern scholars have suggested that this may not be the most frequently employed strategy among learners of varying proficiency levels (e.g., Yin, 2003; Ke, 1998). Whilst recognising Chinese characters requires only an understanding of their overall form, writing them demands that learners master every detail of the characters (Ke, 1998). Yin (2003)'s and Ke (1998)'s research, respectively, indicates that some learners (particularly those at the beginner stage) tend to favour rote memorisation. That is to say, learners repeatedly copy characters to memorise them rather than breaking them down into

radicals or phonetic components. At this early stage, their analytical skills remain underdeveloped due to their limited exposure to Chinese characters. Even when learners develop some sensitivity to the structural characteristics of Chinese characters, they still require memorisation of the character's constituent parts. Once learners reach a higher proficiency level and have fully grasped character structure, decomposing characters into smaller graphic units will enhance learning and improve efficiency. Therefore, both rote memorisation and strategies based on knowledge of character form are indispensable throughout the process of learning Chinese characters. This thesis contends that learning any language, particularly in its early stages, inevitably presents challenges in memorising written characters. Consequently, extensive repetition and imitation of writing are undoubtedly essential. However, strategic teaching remains imperative. On the one hand, it reduces the difficulty of comprehension and learning for students; on the other, it enables them to grasp character structures more rapidly and effectively, thereby achieving the goals of understanding and memorisation.

Furthermore, although some basic Chinese characters originated as pictographs, Zhang & Zhang (2022) argue that the claim that all Chinese characters are pictographic is unreasonable. According to Zhang & Zhang (2022), as language and writing systems have undergone constant change and renewal, the vast majority of Chinese characters are no longer pictographic. Even characters derived from pictographs have evolved to the point that they bear little resemblance to their original forms. However, the method of teaching Chinese characters by explaining their components before their full meaning is unquestionably significant for learning and teaching. Moreover, although the layout of *The Three Character Classic* does not integrate text and illustrations in the manner of *Orbis Pictus*, from a pictographic perspective, the Chinese characters themselves can be interpreted through pictorial means. This approach connects the written form with meaning, similarly, draws on

students' prior experience, and engages them in the learning process. In this limited sense, it bears a certain resemblance to *Orbis Pictus*.

In summary, the vocabulary instruction in *Orbis Pictus* is founded upon its text being an alphabetical script. After the study of the pronunciation of letters, which was discussed in Relation 1, pupils have mastered the sound correspondences of letters. By sounding out letters, they grasp the overall pronunciation of words; conversely, by memorising the holistic pronunciation of words, they repeatedly learn the letter sequences composing that word until they master its accurate spelling. Simultaneously, by linking the words designed by Comenius in *Orbis Pictus* with the named objects and activities depicted in the illustrations and through the one-to-one correspondence of numbered notes, pupils integrate the reading, spelling, and meaning of words.

While the characters in *The Three Character Classic*, owing to their unique nature, are taught with pronunciation and writing taught as separate stages during initial learning. Teachers break down the stroke-based Chinese characters into manageable parts for instruction. Pictographic characters, in particular, are used to prompt students to associate the written form with its corresponding real-world image, thereby achieving the educational objectives of learning to identify and write the characters. Through these two distinct pedagogical approaches, pupils progressively acquire the foundational vocabulary of the language and understand the structure of its basic character within their respective cultural contexts. Subsequent stages of education focus on organising this basic vocabulary in terms of how to employ these new words within context, which is the very core of the third comparison: students and discourse.

6.2.3. Comparison 3: Students and Discourse

In the preceding section, this thesis conducted a preliminary analysis of the vocabulary-teaching designs employed in *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*. The discussion now transits to the next crucial aspect of learning: instructing pupils on how to apply the acquired pronunciation and vocabulary to more advanced textual expression in the books, such as engaging in language communication and composing written work. The forthcoming section first explores how Relation 3 was presented in *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*.

6.2.3.1. Relation 3 in *Orbis Pictus*

Relation 3 refers to the ability to articulate thoughts clearly and to construct coherent communication in the newly learnt language. As the first two relations improve (sound and vocabulary), *Orbis Pictus* could be employed to enhance pupils' advanced language expression, whether oral or written. In other words, this ability represents pupils' capacity to use language coherently and rationally to describe objects or convey ideas. It can be inferred that this ability requires pupils to progress from simple word recognition and naming towards structured, purposeful communication, such as organising ideas into logically coherent sequences, linking events or processes into sentences, and articulating them verbally. This also necessitates that teachers emphasise practising pupils in using language for communication, reasoning, and narration. Upon studying this section, pupils' relation to the discourse of the newly learnt language is improved.

6.2.3.2. Relation 3 in *The Three Character Classic*

Once pupils have learnt the pronunciation and the writing structure of characters from *The Three Character Classic*, they may progress to more advanced practical applications, such as oral communication and narrative composition. As Relation 3

describes, *The Three Character Classic* can be used to deepen pupils' understanding of Chinese characters within their ancient linguistic context, enabling them to apply this comprehension to both oral and written expression. As demonstrated in Section 5.2.3.3 with six selected passages, the text presents dynastic names, chronologies, and commentaries in a highly concise manner, yet it does not provide detailed narrative content. This stems largely from the text's three-character-per-line structure, which necessitates extreme condensation or even omission of key details. Within these historical narratives, the authors typically outline dynastic succession chronologically, distilling widely recognised events into concise, ordered phrases. These refined historical accounts not only convey factual information but also serve as models for students learning traditional Chinese writing and speech. By this stage, pupils have progressed beyond mere character recognition and begin to grasp how Chinese characters combine to form semantic units and historical allusions. Thus, *The Three Character Classic* serves to deepen pupils' understanding of traditional Chinese textual structures. When employing the text to teach written and spoken usage, particularly nuanced phrases, teachers need to contextualise these within their broader narrative frameworks to aid comprehension. Otherwise, without awareness of the narrative context and historical background behind the phrases, pupils may recognise the literal vocabulary yet fail to grasp their overall meaning and deeper connotations. In this sense, pupils' relation with the discourse use of the target language is improved.

6.2.3.3. Similarities

In teaching language, communication, and composition, the first commonality between *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* is that both authors organised vocabulary into thematic categories within their texts for instructional purposes. Despite their extensive range of subject matter, they also exhibit numerous

similarities. Based on an analysis of their subject selections, this thesis lists their respective topic choices (see Figures 42 and 43 below).

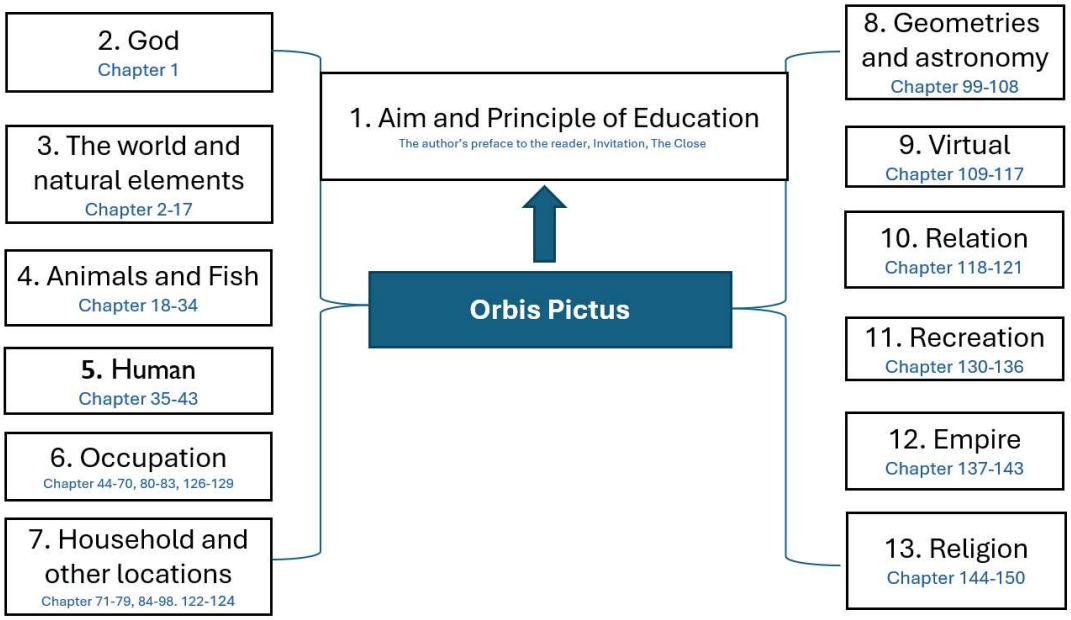


Figure 42: The thematic structure of Orbis Sensualium Pictus. Arthor-generated.

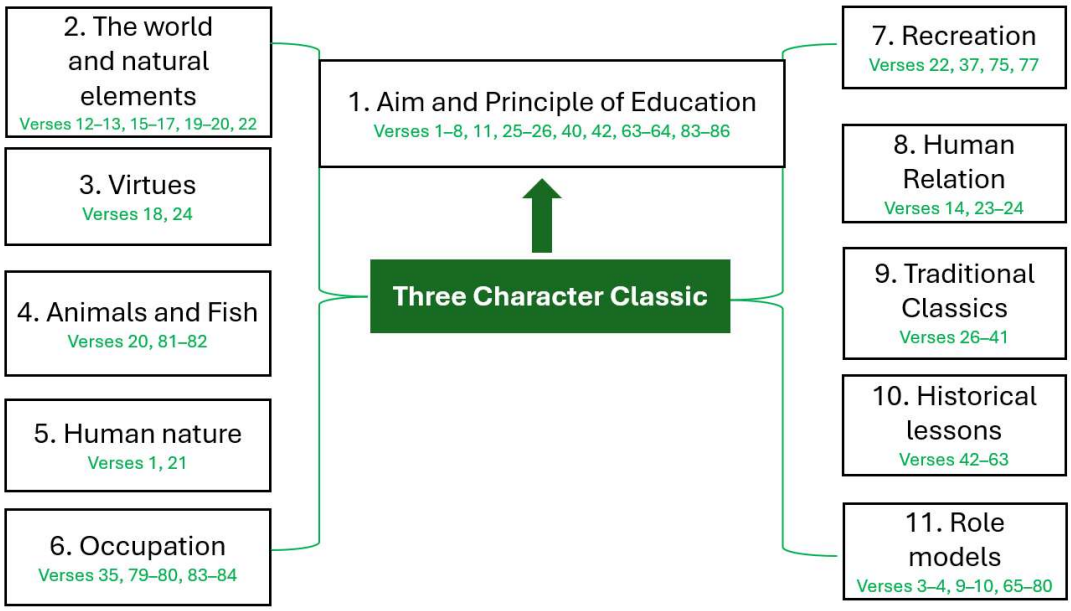


Figure 43: The thematic structure of The Three Character Classic. Author-generated.

Orbis Pictus comprises 151 complete chapters with ordered images and explanations in both Latin and English. Each chapter includes a title, text, and numbered annotations, with word counts ranging from approximately 200 to 1,000 words. *The Three Character Classic* comprises 123 chapters, each with various content dimensions such as history, geography, and philosophy, and each short section comprises four lines, totalling twelve characters. From the subject matter of these two books, certain categories both authors wish to present and discuss, which they consider important for young people. There are also certain categories that one book mentions but the other does not, and this thesis needs to reflect on the reason for this later. First, the discussion turns to examine the subjects both books have in common.

As can be seen from the above images, the book *Orbis Pictus* consists of four parts: the Main Part, which contains 151 sections; the Author's Preface to the Reader; the chapter named Invitation, which introduces the alphabet; and the chapter named The Close, which ends the book. I have arranged these parts into 13 categories, based on their content. For example, Comenius indicates his understanding of education in the preface, invitation chapter and end chapter, so I group them into the same category and name it the aim and principle of education. Turning to the book *Three Character Classics*, it consists of one chapter, which I have arranged and summarised into eleven categories. Among all chapters, the two books share eight categories, summarised as 'Aim and principle of education', 'The world and natural elements', 'Animals and Fish', 'Human', 'Occupation', 'Virtues', 'Relation', and 'Recreation'. Let us take a look at the principal categories that are identical.

The two books can be interpreted to discuss their perspectives on education. In the author's preface, invitation and the close section of *Orbis Pictus*, Comenius reveals his idea of the aim of education, which is, through this book, that the young are expected to learn and practise with the necessary knowledge to speak and act wisely. With the

accumulation of this kind of education, the young become learned, wise and godly individuals. In addition, he indicates his opinion on the principle of education. He suggests that what is taught should be necessary and beneficial to one's life, should lead to one's all-round development and should be explicit and firm, in his words, true, full, clear and solid. In Verses 1–8, 11, 25–26, 40, 42, and 63–64 of *The Three Character Classic*, the author proposes that students should continue studying despite difficulties, reflect while studying, and learn from past experiences. In short, be persistent, diligent and attentive. In Verses 83–86, the author reveals his intention for education: that children should study hard when young and constantly enrich themselves. When they grow up, they can apply what they have learnt to serve the country and the people; by making their due contribution, they can bring glory to their parents and ancestors and set a good example for the next generation.

The two books then discuss their respective understandings of 'human'. In Chapters 35-41 of *Orbis Pictus*, Comenius introduces knowledge of humans, including the first man in the world, the seven ages of man, the senses of man, the soul of man, and deformed people. Mostly, he describes how human beings come into the world and grow up until death, and especially in chapter 42, he indicates that humans can have various emotions, such as hope, fear, desire, and hatred. For him, first, all these emotions are generated reasonably; one should not be blamed for having those emotions because it is natural, but those emotions should be managed rationally, and the ability to be rational is founded in knowledge.

In Verse 1 of *The Three Character Classic*, the author opens with a discussion of human nature and the significance of education. As the required textbook in the school, *The Three Character Classic* is seen as preparatory reading material for promoting the thought of the Confucian school. It is not uncommon for authors to begin their argument about the impact of education by discussing human nature. Even though Xunzi (316-235 BCE) and Mengzi (372-289 BCE) are both representatives

of Confucianism, they hold different views on this topic. Xunzi argues that human nature is evil because people have diverse self-interests and desires. He claims the purpose of education is to keep evil within a reasonable range. On the contrary, Mengzi claims that people are born good-natured and acknowledges that this may be lost due to external influences. From his perspective, education helps people maintain a good heart and rest in peace. It can be seen from Verse 1 that the author of *The Three Character Classic* follows Mengzi's thought, claiming that human nature is that men are born with a good and similar nature and that they differ as they grow older due to different upbringing environments and educational backgrounds. In Verse 20, seven emotions are mentioned: anger, gladness, fear, sadness, hatred, greed, and love (Three Character Classic, n.d.).

Both books coincidentally mention the concept of 'relation' at the same time. In Verses 23–24 of *Orbis Pictus*, Comenius summarised three relationships, which are the relationship as in marriage, the relationship as in parentage, and the relationship as in master-servant.

In *The Three Character Classic*, the author points out three relationships he considers the most important: those between ministers, father and son, and husband and wife. Based on these three relationships, the author brings up 10 types of righteousness when individuals are in the different relationships, which are being kind to offspring as a father, being filial piety as a son, being in harmony with wife as a husband, being obedient to husband as wife, being friendly as an older brother, being respectful to older brothers as a younger brother, being faithful as a friend, being respectful to knowledge and talented people as an emperor and being loyal to emperor as a minister.

Virtue is an important concept that they discussed in both *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*. In Chapters 109-117, Comenius describes eight virtues that he desires to promote, which are 'prudence', 'diligence', 'temperance', 'fortitude',

‘patience’, ‘humanity’, ‘justice’ and ‘liberality’. While the author of *The Three Character Classic* defines ideal individuals for himself in Verse 18, namely a human being with ‘benevolence’, ‘righteousness’, ‘ritual propriety’, ‘wisdom’, and ‘trustworthiness’. From the keywords of the two books in this category, although the authors use different descriptive words, they seem to agree on the image of the younger generation they envision. These words depict people who talk and act at a high level of introversion and self-control.

These subject matters are both mentioned in *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*. In addition, the second similarity is that these two books seem to share a common approach to organising their chapters, teaching students how to use vocabulary to describe objects and express opinions. In other words, it can be inferred that both books move beyond teaching children’s letters, characters and vocabulary to focus on learning how to study and compose texts as a more advanced language skill. This approach is understandable, as learning a language involves linking vocabulary to form complete sentence patterns and passages, which could be considered a crucial foundation for clear and accurate communication and writing. After studying *Orbis Pictus*, pupils could be assumed to master concrete descriptive actions such as identifying objects and describing occupations. *The Three Character Classic*, meanwhile, could be used to teach students how to narrate exemplary stories and convey moral concepts. These skills could be learned and imitated by pupils, enabling them to employ them in oral communication and in written compositions in this language. In this way, through the authors’ meticulous design, sentence patterns and discourse could be taught using a unified, structured, and systematic approach.

This layout facilitates students’ acquisition of sentence patterns and essay-writing skills, enabling them to begin imitative composition. As Zhu Xi of the Song Dynasty observed, ‘Ancient scholars composed essays and poetry largely by emulating their predecessors; prolonged study naturally leads to mastery’ (Li, 1986). By teaching such

materials, educators enable pupils to grasp certain compositional techniques, thereby facilitating imitative writing that meets the requirements of the imperial examinations. *The Three Character Classic*, whilst primarily a literacy and reading text, may also be categorised as a writing manual. Through its recitation, children become attuned to the rhyming patterns of its verses and the compositional methods employed. Over time, this exposure cultivates an understanding of literary craft, ultimately paving the way for independent composition (Zheng, 2017).

Orbis Pictus can be approached in this manner, and so too can *The Three Character Classic*. Particularly, *The Three Character Classic* devotes considerable space to historical narratives, encompassing the unfolding of historical processes, the succession of dynasties, historical allusions, and numerous accounts of historical figures. It extols the virtuous words and deeds of these renowned individuals. Take the example of 'Xī Mèng Mǔ, zé lín chù' (昔孟母，择邻处) – six characters encapsulating the famous anecdote of 'Meng Mu's Three Relocations'. By imitating the composition of these historical narratives, pupils not only comprehend and master the progression of history but also adapt to the stylistic requirements of the imperial examinations, laying a foundational grounding for future examination writing.

Now, the next section looks at the chapters that are not mentioned in both books but are important in their respective typographical choices.

6.2.3.4. Differences

Firstly, despite these similarities, the texts' subject matter remains markedly distinct. In *Orbis Pictus,* as evidenced by the chapter structure outlined in the last chapter, Comenius' headings are predominantly concrete nouns or action verbs (that is, objective entities in the world). The chapters commence with fundamental cosmic elements (world, sky, fire, water, etc.) and natural phenomena (clouds, rain, etc.), then progress through various categories of the plant kingdom (trees, fruits, flowers,

and grasses) before describing human anatomy, senses, and stages of life. They ultimately ascend to the realms of morality and faith, encompassing virtues and vices, religion, and related matters. Through analysing scene illustrations and employing simple declarative sentences, children are taught functional, descriptive communication.

In *The Three Character Classic*, as illustrated in the last chapter, the author employs numerous abstract concepts and historical proper nouns to elucidate the significance of education through the study of canonical texts. For example, when introducing the traditional classics in Verses 26-32, *The Three Character Classic* summarises classics such as *The Analects (论语), The Four Books (四书), The Five Classics (五经), The Mengzi (孟子), The Great Learning (大学), Book of Changes (易经), Book of Rites (礼记),* and *Spring and Autumn Annals (春秋) to* construct a comprehensive Confucian knowledge system. In addition, stories of historical luminaries are used to inspire students. For example, in Verse 71, Su Laoquan, aged twenty-seven, first resolved to strive, reading books (Su Laoquan, also named Su Xun, was only twenty-seven years old when he was inspired to study and began to study the classics), emphasising learning's vital role in personal development, and through highly condensed historical allusions (such as Verse 58. Tang Gaozu Li Yuan launched a righteous army in Taiyuan in 617 to quell the turmoil at the end of the Sui Dynasty and start the foundation of the Tang Empire), to establish students' awareness of history.

Secondly, different genres serve different communicative purposes. In Relation 3, the two books used to provide writing templates for pupils exhibit significant differences in textual genre. *Orbis Pictus* primarily employs explanatory and descriptive discourse patterns. Its main text types introduce subjects through naming and definition, using text and images linked by numbered notes to elucidate concepts, thereby presenting an overall introduction to the world. This relatively straightforward textual organisation gains precision through accompanying illustrations and numbered notes.

For instance, the chapter on flowers details the varieties and sizes of flowers. In contrast, *The Three Character Classic* predominantly employs aphoristic admonitions, using highly condensed language to present principles for understanding phenomena and conducting oneself. For example, in Verse 11, the author emphasises that practising filial piety towards parents and maintaining close bonds with siblings are paramount virtues, with the acquisition of knowledge and discernment being secondary necessities. The challenge is to convey rich content through a very concise text that cannot be guaranteed to be understood simply by rote memorisation by the students. In this case, the educators' guidance in deciphering the texts is essential.

6.2.3.5. Clarification and Reflection

By comparing the ways in which the discourses of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* are used, the discussion goes beyond mere pedagogical differences to gain insight into the foundational principles behind the very different discursive modes established by these two works. From the perspectives of genre and discourse stance, the ways of speaking and writing cultivated by *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* show noticeable differences. These divergences simultaneously reveal distinct teacher-student relationships and learner positions. Based on the analysis of relation3 in Chapter 4, *Orbis Pictus* mainly employs descriptive and explanatory language. Through key steps such as naming, explaining, and enumerating, it presents young readers with the visible phenomena and activities of the world (including those not directly visible but whose essence can be articulated) via textual means (Comenius, 1659). This approach guides them into a world that can be described and depicted through the language being learnt, where all objects and key actions can be clearly and accurately recognised. Throughout the educational process, pupils can spontaneously practise the target language using the phonological rules established in Relation 1 and the lexical vocabulary in Relation 2, while the numerically coded images in *Orbis Pictus* activate prior knowledge to practice words

in contexts (not just to identify objects) in Relation 3. Even when it contains moral and religious undertones, its presentation method still favours allowing children to first observe and comprehend, then build upon that understanding to form wiser judgements.

The role of the teacher in this process is one of observation and support; they function more as a guide, assisting pupils in establishing connections between letters and sounds while encouraging them to explore by themselves. Assistance and explanation from the teacher are only necessary when pupils have no prior experience with the object or activity, or when the concept is overly abstract. Within this educational environment, pupils do not develop a marked dependency on the teacher.

By comparison, the text of *The Three Character Classic* makes extensive use of highly condensed assertions and exhortations, compressing ethical relationships (discussed in Section 6.2.5.3), pedagogical principles (discussed in Section 5.2.3.1.1), and worldly matters (discussed in Section 5.2.3.1.1), into the strict expressive conventions of three-character phrases. This organisational approach poses a formidable challenge to student self-study, as it relies heavily on the teacher's line-by-line interpretation and explanation. Under these conditions, it is almost impossible for students to learn by themselves spontaneously. This could hint at the teacher's role as an authoritative exemplar, whose pronunciation and ideas serve as the direct standard for pupils to follow. The transmission of knowledge through explanation carries a heightened sense of normativity and continuity. Within this pedagogical arrangement, pupils rely heavily on the teacher, who mediates the text's meaning and determines how it should be understood.

In this genre-based teaching approach, pupils learn from *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* how to organise words/characters into similar sentence patterns, genres, and narrative structures that they copy from each text. It should be inferred that this organisation of text is supposed to involve teaching and linking both spoken

and written language. However, within the respective contexts of the two texts, the emphasis lies more on textual expression, that is, the attainment of written language, particularly in the case of *The Three Character Classic*.

Just as mentioned in Section 6.2.1.5 regarding the disparity between studying spoken and written Chinese, regional differences lead to significant variations in spoken pronunciation. However, this did not negatively influence students from using the Chinese language to sit the imperial examinations and attain official professional positions owing to the strict standardisation of written language. According to the requirements of rhyming and metrical composition in classical texts, the imperial examinations merely demanded the use of written language to produce works conforming to poetic rhythm, without imposing constraints on spoken language (Arcodia & Basciano, 2021). In this manner, as the demands on spoken pronunciation are reduced to meet rhythmic requirements, combined with the characteristics of Chinese pronunciation, specifically because of its monosyllabic nature and tonal system, memory is aided through rhythm and rhyme. Following the teacher's lead in reading aloud, one can master syllables, tones, and sentence intonation by relying on rhythm until they can produce a full article accordingly themselves. This approach can be considered the most intuitive and straightforward way to teach a text by a teacher who speaks a dialect (Arcodia & Basciano, 2021). In this way, students spoke different dialects but produced written work that conformed to the standardised requirements of the imperial examinations.

In the respective analyses of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* in Chapters 4 and 5, both Relation 3 and Relation 5 address the themes selected by their respective authors. This is reflected specifically in the titles of the chapters in these books or in the broad categorisation of their content. The distinction lies in the fact that Relation 3 addresses the content of these classifications and the rationale behind their selection, which shall be analysed here. In contrast, Relation 5 focuses more on

the selection and sequencing of these classifications, which has been examined in detail in Comparison 5.

Dong (2018) maintains that the selection of textual content is inextricably linked to ideological orientation. He breaks down the value of subject matters within textbook texts into meaningful components. Among those, two components are particularly suitable for explanation in this thesis: the compiler's functional orientation and value orientation. As tools for language learning, language textbooks' texts first possess particularly distinct functional objectives. Through the topics presented in the texts, it can be inferred what the compiler aims to provide learners via the textbook and what learners can gain from it. For instance, if the compiler emphasises the practical utility of the textbook, they will often favour selecting topics and scenarios closely aligned with real-world social contexts, alongside texts that prioritise the application of life skills. If the editor prioritises the transmission of cultural values and concepts, they will often favour texts that embody national culture and noble virtues. Secondly, the subject matter of texts can reveal the editor's value orientation – that is, which values they prioritise, which ideals they favour, and which concepts within a value system receive particular emphasis. For instance, if the compiler prioritises the public virtue of self-sacrifice for others, they are likely to select texts illustrating such acts of devotion; if the editor prioritises familial and friendship bonds, they will predominantly select texts concerning 'family', 'friendship', and 'romantic love'; if the editor particularly values individual engagement in social and political affairs, they will likely prioritise texts concerning community activities and democratic participation; if editors prioritise personal development and growth, they tend to favour inspirational texts on self-presentation and self-improvement.

Using this framework, this thesis briefly analyses the thematic selections in *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* to discern the authors' ideological inclinations. From a functional perspective, *Orbis Pictus* employs imagery and classification to help

children recognise concrete entities such as animals, plants, and humans, thereby fostering observational and categorisation skills. This approach appears to prioritise practical utility. Conversely, *The Three Character Classic* emphasises the internalisation of moral values and the inculcation of Confucian principles (such as filial piety, respect, and a love of learning), thus leaning more towards the transmission of cultural values and ethical frameworks. From a value-oriented perspective, *Orbis Pictus* encourages pupils to spontaneously perceive and comprehend the objective world (including plants, animals, and humanity) through sensory engagement. Conversely, *The Three Character Classic* is more dedicated to guiding pupils to learn from their predecessors and to study traditional and classical texts.

In general, both *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* suggest a teaching method centred on the teacher's educational intentions; once pupils have mastered basic pronunciation and vocabulary, they are guided to use the language to communicate. This includes, but is not limited to, narrating a story or describing an object. The students' ability to communicate using this language plays a crucial role. Although the teaching objectives are similar, the nature of the learning content (the words themselves) between the two books is fundamentally different, leading to markedly distinct teaching methods. Due to inherent differences in word choice across languages, the text in *Orbis Pictus* provides students with additional supplementary information, enabling them to learn word pronunciation and meanings more independently. Whereas the text in *The Three Character Classic* requires students to rely considerably on teachers' explanations and guided reading to achieve mastery of Chinese characters.

6.2.4. Comparison 4: Students and Action

This section focuses on analysing the similarities and differences between *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* in guiding students' conduct. The key point of analysis in this section is that both works transcend mere language learning, instead directing attention towards the orientation of student action. In *Orbis Pictus*, action is guided by right perception, right understanding, rational judgement, and wise conduct. Similarly, *The Three Character Classic* employs a progressive approach, aiming to have pupils internalise moral conduct through imitation, building on their language learning. From this perspective, this section will examine both books, seeking to explore the authors' pedagogical philosophies regarding how education directs pupils' actions and the underlying motivations behind those actions. Let us first examine how Comenius proceeded in *Orbis Pictus*.

6.2.4.1. Relation 4 in *Orbis Pictus*

In *Orbis Pictus*, this thesis has selected several chapters in which Comenius depicts the outward and inward senses, as well as deformed and monstrous people. In these two chapters, Comenius places the human being at the centre of knowledge, endeavouring to deepen pupils' understanding of their distinctive human nature. One of those distinctive natures is the capacity to make judgments that require observation and understanding from multiple perspectives to achieve comprehensiveness and accuracy. Similarly, to convey matters accurately, Comenius considered multifaceted perspectives in his typographical design when depicting the same subject, employing numerical notes, images, and textual descriptions to jointly pinpoint the object, thereby enabling pupils to perceive the essence of things more precisely. By studying these chapters in this way, children develop their perception, gradually being guided towards new behavioural patterns. For instance, upon learning that humans possess internal and external senses that provide diverse perceptions,

pupils gradually grasp the multifaceted nature of knowledge. This extends beyond rote memorisation and recognition of basic concepts in subjects to encompass discernment and decision-making abilities. When pupils comprehend themselves and perceive both internal and external worlds, while also acquiring the capacity to distinguish right from wrong, they develop the wisdom to act rightly.

6.2.4.2. Relation 4 in *The Three Character Classic*

In *The Three Character Classic*, the author has selected several examples to demonstrate specific instances of virtue to students, including figures from the natural world, animals, and insects. As shown in the sample chapters section in Section 5.2.3.4.1, the stories of Dou Yanshan, Huang Xiang, and Kong Rong (Verses 4, 9, and 10) attempt to demonstrate to pupils how to care for and show filial piety towards family members, and the exemplars of Su Laoquan, Liang Hao, and the scholar students (Verses 71, 73, 75, and 76) show students how to persevere steadfastly in one's studies, regardless of age, while fables of dogs, chickens, silkworms, and bees (Verses 81 and 82) highlight that animals and insects are also exemplars of the virtue of being studious. Teachers can effectively teach the textbook content by incorporating model stories from the text, prompting students to reflect on their own circumstances by modelling the roles in the text. After studying these classic stories, pupils gain a more intuitive understanding of the virtues and conduct depicted, thereby cultivating a conscious habit of emulating such behaviour in their future lives. Having gained a basic understanding of the general content of these two books in the fourth relation, let us now examine their similarities and differences.

6.2.4.3. Similarities

Within the first three relations, it can be observed that both *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* centre on the knowledge of a target language. These three relations employ the transmission of language usage across varying levels as a

learning pathway, rather than training in specific vocational skills. Based on this, the first similarity at the stage of Relation 4 is that this study contends that *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* reflect a shift from imparting knowledge to students towards educating them on how to act. In other words, at this stage, neither work focuses on cultivating students' specific career development but rather aims to improve their relation to judgment and decision-making based on an understanding of the world.

Of these two books, *Orbis Pictus* takes on a structure of various topics of objects in the world, which is similar to the encyclopaedic classification of knowledge. These topics include nature for humans and the kingdom, mainly describing what exists in the world and what it is like. For instance, in the Chapter 'Flowers', it introduces the names and characteristics of different flowers in a garden but does not intend to teach students how to plant them. Similarly, in the chapter 'The Shoemaker', the author presents illustrative vocabulary and detailed descriptions of various types of shoes and tools but does not aim to teach shoemaking as a profession. As discussed in the analysis of the second relation (Section 4.2.3.2), it provides pupils with linguistic vocabulary linked to real-world objects through naming. This pattern directs students to form the habit of observing first, learning to name it, understanding its essence, and finally knowing how to deal with it properly, which also aligns with Comenius' vision for his pupils: to speak and act wisely (Comenius, 1887).

On the other hand, the analysis of the first three relations in *The Three Character Classic* shows that it spans natural elements, human ethics, and historical orthodoxy, outlining a comprehensive Confucian knowledge system. These components share a common trait: they are either factual or normative knowledge and require memorisation to comprehend. However, this book cannot be used as teaching material to teach pupils practical skills. As articulated in the Verse 知某数，识某文 (Knowing certain numbers, recognising certain texts) in *The Three Character Classic*,

whose educational emphasis lies in mastering cultural literacy knowledge. Furthermore, the Verse 首孝弟，次见闻 (First comes filial piety and brotherly devotion, and next comes knowledge and experience), which also prioritises fundamentals before secondary knowledge. These chapters demonstrate that its knowledge system follows a clear hierarchy of values, with natural knowledge serving ethical knowledge, but not vocational knowledge.

The second similarity is that, although *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* differ in their themes and pedagogical approaches, both texts guide students in their actions by presenting a superior model for imitation. In *Orbis Pictus*, this ideal type appears to represent the theological order associated with God. This is primarily because the very first chapter bears the title 'God'. In this chapter, Comenius describes God as both omniscient and the origin of the entire system of knowledge, representing reason, order, and creation. In the following chapters, Comenius enumerates the various things of the world and explains their essence through descriptive texts, images, and numbered notes, so that the learner can understand the essence of those things created by God and ultimately grasp the world.

Similarly, *The Three Character Classic* also portrays exemplary figures for pupils to emulate. The concepts of the 'sage' and 'gentleman' represent the highest ideal type, embodying a progressive goal in moral education that can be attained step by step (through the learning pathways described in the text), as discussed in Chapter 5.2.3.4.5. Though these ideal figures are not explicitly named in *The Three Character Classic*, the virtues they possess, such as righteousness and benevolence, are highly encouraged in *The Three Character Classic*. In addition, numerous historical figures (Yu, Huang, Kongzi in Verses 45, 46, and 41), as well as insects (fireflies in Verse 69) and animals (dogs in Verse 81), serve as concrete embodiments of the various virtues associated with this ideal type.

6.2.4.4. Differences

Although both *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* can be used to provide students with knowledge of the world and thereby guide their conduct, it is still necessary to recognise a fundamental difference between these books. The difference manifested in two aspects. One aspect concerns the mechanism by which knowledge is translated into action; the other concerns the guidance, from the knowledge offered by the two books, on what the educator expects students to become. The two points of divergence shall be examined in this section.

Firstly, when *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* present students with knowledge and direct their judgment and decision-making, the way in which this knowledge is translated into action differs.

In *Orbis Pictus*, as Comenius states in his Preface to the Reader, education is the means to 'expel rudeness', and young minds deserve to be nurtured in school. Comenius argues that if students can make good use of their senses and accurately perceive differences in all things, they have laid the foundation for all wisdom, all wise words, and all wise actions on the path of life. It presupposes that the teaching must be true, complete, clear, and solid (Comenius, 1887, p. xiii). He also states that students can neither 'act wisely' nor 'speak wisely' unless they first understand rightly about all the things that are to be done and all that is to be said (Comenius, 1887, p. xiii). To assist schoolteachers in achieving these desired pedagogical outcomes, Comenius created the book *Orbis Pictus*, which presents illustrations and labels all important things of the world and human life. According to Comenius, these pictures present all the perceivable things (including the invisible things in their forms), thus constituting a system of illustrations of the whole world. The descriptions and topics of each picture summarise the whole picture in a generic term (Comenius, 1887, p. xiv).

From what Comenius said, it can be seen that knowledge of the things of the world (objective descriptions of things and their functions) is presented in *Orbis Pictus* through a combination of pictures and descriptions. In Relation 4, this study has analysed that in the process of educating the essence of things, students are repeating the process of seeing things, eliciting familiar memories, and understanding the essence of the things in combination with the explanations in the book, thus reaching a better understanding of the object related to this topic in the book. After gaining a full understanding of the matter, students can reach a sound judgement and act accordingly. Therefore, up to this point, it can be inferred that the educational mechanism outlined by Comenius can be summarised as knowing-judging-acting.

By contrast, *The Three Character Classic* emphasises the internalisation of the moral knowledge its students have acquired. In the opening Verse 'If not taught, nature will change' (苟不教，性乃迁), the author indicates that education is a necessary means to prevent the loss of human goodness. Furthermore, in the Verse First filial piety and fraternal duty, then knowledge and experience (首孝悌，次见闻), the author suggests that familial virtues are prioritised over natural knowledge. The text presents educational theory through highly condensed aphoristic language. For instance, the Verse 'All Instruction of the Young Must Be Carefully Considered) posits that learning primarily manifests as recitation and memorisation' (凡训蒙，须讲究), and the Verse 'Recite with the mouth, ponder with the mind; morning and evening' (口而诵，心而惟。朝于斯，夕于斯) suggests that the author regards learning primarily as rote learning and memorisation. On the basis of these statements, it can be inferred that for *The Three Character Classic*, knowledge is not primarily pursued for the sake of a clear understanding of the appearance and properties of objects. Rather, the learning objective is to memorise and imitate according to normative standards of 'what ought to be done', gradually internalising them through repeated practice into

daily habits. Therefore, the educational mechanism outlined in *The Three Character Classic* can be summarised as remembering-repeating-doing.

The second difference lies in the differing definitions of the ideal model presented to students for emulation. Simply put, the ideal model refers to the person the text implies students should aspire to become. From the analysis in Chapter 4 of Comenius' educational philosophy and the cultural context of his era, it is evident that both his life and educational background were deeply intertwined with theology. Consequently, it can be inferred that his educational objectives were intrinsically linked to the ultimate theological and moral goals. Furthermore, in *Orbis Pictus*, as have discussed in the analysis of the commonalities between the two books above, Comenius explicitly recounts God's naming of all things and His omniscient authority both at the beginning and the end of *Orbis Pictus*, which can thus be seen that Comenius' educational philosophy is closely linked to his theological thought. At the same time, he openly states in the book that he hopes students will learn to name all things and perceive the essence of all things. From this point, it is evident that, when contemplating what kind of person pupils would become after receiving education, Comenius drew heavily on the qualities of God.

By contrast, unlike Orbis, which posits a transcendent being (God) as the ultimate learning goal for its pupils, *The Three Character Classic* lists a complex ideal model through a set of emulatable models (historical figures, natural creatures, and the like). Specifically, *The Three Character Classic* does not present any single figure embodying extraordinary qualities beyond the common man but rather enumerates a series of exemplars of individual virtues for pupils to study. For example, Verse 66 describes Zhao Zhongling, who studied the Analects of Kongzi and applied himself diligently to his studies, though he had obtained an official position (赵中令，读鲁论。彼既仕，学且勤), and Verse 75 portrays the image of an intelligent child (莹八岁，能咏诗。泌七岁，能赋棋), etc. Moreover, *The Three Character Classic* does not merely

portray humans as exemplars for educational purposes; it also presents commendable animal traits that pupils can study and emulate. For example, Verse 81 Dogs keep watch at night, Cocks herald the dawn) praised the diligent watchdog (犬守夜，鸡司晨), while Verse 82 Silkworms spin silk, bees make honey) depicts industrious bees busily gathering nectar (蚕吐丝，蜂酿蜜). Each example in these passages represents a virtue or habit worthy of emulation, collectively forming an ideal learning objective for pupils to study and inherit.

6.2.4.5. Clarification and Reflection

As mentioned in Section 3.2 of this thesis, which analyses education and its related elements, a preliminary examination of the question of what education is for reveals that educational content encompasses aspects that enable students to establish and improve relations with other objects, other living beings, others, or themselves. The educational content may refer to knowledge, or it may refer to skills, or it may refer to qualities such as compassion, patience, courage, or self-control. Students' connection to these qualities can be improved through their changes in understanding during the educational process. From this perspective, neither *Orbis Pictus* nor *The Three Character Classic* teaches specific practical skills, but rather, they provide students with frameworks for understanding the world. *Orbis Pictus* aims to guide students' actions in accordance with the natural order through a clear understanding of the world and its objectives and thus presents knowledge of essence to guide how they should deal with it. *The Three Character Classic*, on the other hand, is closer to traditional Confucian value-oriented intellectual education, which focuses on how to behave correctly and on internalising established language patterns and behavioural norms through recitation and imitation of classical texts.

These two points represent distinct long-term developmental trajectories for pupils, depending on differing definitions of student 'educability'. Tredgold (1921) believes

‘educability’ means the ability of the child to develop intellectually, and by intellectual development is meant the growth of those faculties of mind which are normal in the race and nation to which it belongs. Tyler (1948) holds that ‘educability’ refers to a potential that exists in individuals or groups, whether or not they are truly educated, but it can only be verified by their actual responses to educational opportunities. Heath (1968) claims that a person’s educability is influenced by a number of personality factors, depending in particular on his or her maturity, the way in which he or she expresses his or her impulses and needs, his or her self-perceptions and values, and his or her socio-emotional relationships with others. This thesis argues that ‘educability’ refers not only to an individual’s physiological ability to attend school but more fundamentally to his or her openness and malleability, that is, his or her potential to be moulded and nurtured. For example, it is about whether an individual’s habits, judgements and character are fixed, or whether they can be guided by others to improve their specific relation to something else.

Potential requirements for the educability of students in *Orbis Pictus* may include that they should have some degree of prior experience (e.g. having seen the thing in question or the thing itself that they are about to learn about) and be able to develop judgemental and evaluative skills at the stage of learning to name and understand correctly, and thus grow over the course of the learning process to be able to ultimately talk wisely about and deal wisely with the subject matter. The design of placing God at the beginning and end of *Orbis Pictus* is an important embodiment of Comenius’ philosophy of education. At the heart of this is the idea that God is the creator of the entire universe of knowledge and an omniscient being. The scholar (teacher) described by Comenius educates in the name of God, and the student grows by properly observing, naming, and understanding the world under the teacher’s guidance, making the acquisition of wise words and deeds the inevitable result of their education. In this way, the student’s personal growth aligns with the image of God, the ideal model of learning embedded in *Orbis Pictus*.

In the case of *The Three Character Classic*, the potential requirements for the educability of students may include, firstly, the ability to recite it by heart in order to become proficient in the language and its connotations; and secondly, the ability to shape personality and action through the values and codes of conduct enshrined in the book, so as to become competent subjects who know the propriety, etiquette and their position in the society. The text of *The Three Character Classic* contains descriptions of the world, covering natural elements such as astronomy and geography, as well as flowers, plants, birds, fish, and insects, and human beings. The text offers students advice to be diligent in their studies, provides numerous examples of people from different social classes who persevered in their studies, and uses the analogy of the industriousness of animals and insects to imply that the duty of human beings lies in their pursuit of learning.

Yet the most pertinent point of the text lies in its explicit guidance on value prioritisation (according to the Verse 首孝悌, 次见闻, filial piety and brotherly devotion should come first, and then knowledge and experience). This chapter argues that knowledge is designed to foster interpersonal virtues: the insights and cultural knowledge acquired by the student will ultimately be translated into appropriate actions that embody interpersonal values, such as filial piety, brotherly righteousness, etiquette, and justice. The educated person is one who combines the moral habits of the various exemplary characters in the text, which aligns with the aforementioned thesis of the ideal learning model in *The Three Character Classic*.

Although this thesis examines the types of knowledge referred to in *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, and the educability of students, it does not assert that they will inevitably develop into the ideal type of self-described in the aforementioned texts. Various social influences, personal judgment, and even genetic factors are important factors that should not be ignored in the process of students'

self-development. The principle of translating knowledge into action needs to be explored in depth after finishing this thesis and shall not be further elaborated here.

In summary, the two works, *Orbis Pictus* and The Book of *The Three Character Classic*, initially appear to be used to teach students a new language, but in fact, both suggest broader educational possibilities, such as providing guidance on conduct. *Orbis Pictus* guides students to emulate the rational conduct it exemplifies by presenting the world as a functional system of rational actions in the name of God. On the other hand, by constructing knowledge of nature and history as a repository of moral discourse and jurisprudence, *The Three Character Classic* clearly defines the ethical rules of literary writing and moral action that students must follow in various situations, ultimately orienting all conduct toward the moral goal of becoming a sage and a gentleman.

Thus, the intellectual and educational nature of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* does not exist in isolation but also serves other educational purposes, such as shaping daily action and moral habits. What, then, is the purpose and significance of this educational purpose? Perhaps the answer could be found in Comparison 5: Students and the world/society.

6.2.5. Comparison 5: Students and the World/Society

This section focuses on analysing the similarities and differences between *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* in guiding students to position themselves within their social groups. The core analysis centres on how both works transcend mere language lessons, shifting focus to exploring students' place within an ordered society. In *Orbis Pictus*, Comenius employs a specific chapter sequence to present the creation of the world and then to reveal the order of existence for all things in the world. While *The Three Character Classic* similarly employs textual interpretation to enable

students, building upon their language learning, to comprehend the hierarchical order of social standing inherent within the text. From this perspective, this section will conduct a comparative analysis of the two works by examining the educational philosophies of both authors concerning how the two books should guide pupils' understanding of their position within the relations among all things in the world. Let us first explore how the book *Orbis Pictus* was used to improve the relation between the students and their understanding of the order of the world.

6.2.5.1. Relation 5 in *Orbis Pictus*

In *Orbis Pictus*, as shown in Section 4.2.3.5.1, sections covering topics such as God, the World and the Elements, Plants and Animals, Humankind, Empires and Religions, depict a world order created by God rather than merely isolated objects or skills. Within this divinely ordered cosmos, God is portrayed as the supreme being—self-existent, spiritual, omniscient, and omnipresent. Chapters such as The World, Natural Elements, Plants, and Animals present the universe as a meticulously constructed natural order. The chapter on humans explains that human beings were created in God's image, endowed with sensory and rational souls. Sections on Empire and Religion situate learners within the socio-political hierarchy of human society and a Christian-centred religious framework. Through this specific sequence of chapters, students systematically grasp the interconnectedness of the cosmos and thereby recognise their responsibility to uphold the world order through wise words and deeds. In this way, the relation between the student and the world is improved.

6.2.5.2. Relation 5 in *The Three Character Classic*

Selected passages from *The Three Character Classic* further explore how the text constructs broader cognitive connections for students, such as linking personal growth to the greater cosmic and social orders. As discussed in Section 5.2.3.5.2, its overarching narrative sequence and framework system reveal the mutual resonance

between natural cycles (the four seasons) and natural elements (the Five Elements), the correspondence between the relationship between heaven and humanity and the cosmic structure, and hierarchical kinship relationships, encompassing specific status roles and modes of interaction. Specifically, these chapters depict the forms of all things: Heaven, Earth, and Humanity (Chapter 13) constitute the world's three fundamental elements; the Sun, Moon, and Stars (Chapter 13) govern the order of the Three Lights; individuals belong to families, thereby inheriting the bloodline of the Nine Clans; and rulers and subjects, fathers and sons, and husbands and wives all adhere to their respective modes of interaction. This guides pupils to recognise their position within multiple nested orders: as descendants within the family bloodline, as subjects within the political system, and as individuals within the tripartite realm of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. By presenting these paradigms in parallel, *The Three Character Classic* leads children to understand that the seasons of the world and human relationships are fixed and non-interchangeable. In this way, the relation between the student and their understanding of the established order of the world is improved.

6.2.5.3. Similarities

Firstly, at the stage of Relation 5, both *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* aim to present students with an integrated body of knowledge, rather than isolated knowledge points.

In *Orbis Pictus*, according to Comenius, he wished to present students with all the visible things (including invisible things classified according to their nature) in the world (Comenius, 1659, p. xiv). What things exist in this world, and how people ought to understand these matters wisely, is the principal content Comenius wished to demonstrate to his pupils. Just as the content framework of *Orbis Pictus* analysed in Section 4.2.3.5, Comenius provides a detailed and systematic depiction of the whole

world, incorporating numerous natural elements, creatures and activities. In other words, Comenius organised the world into visible, nameable and interpretable units, so that children could deepen their understanding of these things and of the world as a whole by learning to name the things in these wholes.

Similarly, *The Three Character Classic* also presents pupils with a composite world brimming with knowledge. As demonstrated in the analysis of its overall framework in Section 5.2.3.5, the text integrates cosmic elements, human relationships, the succession of historical dynasties, and exemplars of virtue into a single chain of knowledge, which can assist pupils in comprehending the inherent hierarchy of values in this world.

The second similarity lies in the worlds of knowledge and order depicted by *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, respectively. In their respective world, the role of the student is predominantly that of an individual adapting to the knowledge and ordering systems they study, rather than one who creates or alters this established order.

In *Orbis Pictus*, at the beginning of the book, in the Chapter of Invitation, Comenius employed a dialogue to introduce the subsequent discussion and establish the tone for the entire book. This dialogue was also mentioned in this study, in Section 4.2, to discuss the pedagogical relation between teachers and students. In short, this dialogue involves the master inviting the boy to participate in his education, explaining why he is being educated and what he is to be educated in (Comenius, 1659, p. 1). In this dialogue, when answering the question of how he is going to teach the boy, the master said, 'I will guide thee thorow all. I will shew thee all. I will name thee all', and the boy answered, 'See, here I am; lead me in the name of God' (Comenius, 1659, pp.1). The verbs Comenius used to indicate the relation between teacher and pupil in the educational process are: 'Guide', 'show', 'name' and 'lead'. From this perspective, it can be inferred that Comenius presupposes that students'

role is to observe and comprehend the process of correct naming by following the guidance of an authority (master in the name of God).

Similarly, although *Orbis Pictus* presents knowledge in different ways, *The Three Character Classic* defines pupils as members of an established social order (rather than its original creator), guiding them through education into the pre-existing order of the world. Many clues in *The Three Character Classic* reveal this point. For example, in verse 'as a son in his youth, He cherished his parents and friends, and learned the ways of propriety' (为人子，方少时。亲师友，习礼仪), Verse 'The Three Principles are: The righteousness between sovereign and subject; The affection between father and son; The harmony between husband and wife' (三纲者，君臣义。父子亲，夫妇顺, and verse 'First comes filial piety and fraternal duty; Next comes knowledge and experience' (首孝悌，次见闻), placing children first within ethical relationships, educating them with virtues such as etiquette, respect, and filial piety, before proceeding to acquire other knowledge. In verse 'Benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and integrity. These five constants must not be disordered.' (曰仁义，礼智信。此五常，不容紊), and verse 'These ten principles are common to all mankind' (此十义，人所同) establishes the existing order as a premise that cannot be altered. Furthermore, in verse, 'one should learn diligently in his/her early years and advance in their prime. Serving the king at the top and benefiting the people at the bottom.' (幼而学，壮而行。上致君，下泽民) further demonstrates that the purpose of education lies in the responsibility for serving society. In this way, by explaining the interpersonal relationships in which children find their position in society and the social responsibility they must fulfil, *The Three Character Classic* shapes children as participants in and inheritors of traditional Chinese feudal Confucian society.

6.2.5.4. Differences

As mentioned above, the identity of the educand in both *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* is situated as a participant and inheritor rather than a creator or agent of change. However, when further explore how each of these two books constructs its own world order, clear differences between them could be found.

Firstly, the origins of the world order differ between *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*. As discussed in relation 5, both books present order as the basic framework for students to understand the world. In the opening chapter, 'Invitation' of *Orbis Pictus*, the dialogue between the Master and the Boy reveals a pedagogical relation in which the teacher, in the name of God, leads the child to enter the world, and the child follows the teacher's guidance to learn the names of the world's objects. This dialogue serves as a precise microcosm of the teacher-student relationship throughout *Orbis Pictus*, revealing the book's inherent teacher-student status structure. That is to say, the efficacy of the teacher's guidance and naming rests upon the theological authority of God. Within the world order constructed by *Orbis Pictus*, pupils learn to name the world through observation and study, thereby understanding the order established and governed by God. This implies that pupils' correct understanding of the world constitutes their correct understanding of God. By contrast, the validity of order in *The Three Character Classic* is based more on the Confucian ethical-ritual structure. As evidenced by terms used such as 'Three Cardinal Principles', 'Five Constant Virtues', and 'must not be disrupted', *The Three Character Classic* directly establishes order as an immutable premise. It places children within relational networks such as father and son, sovereign and subject, husband and wife, thereby presenting order primarily as an ethical hierarchy and normative framework. In this way, while both *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* intend to educate children about the idea of order, their foundations and sources differ.

Secondly, the two books, *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, are structured differently within their respective temporal systems. The temporal nature of *Orbis Pictus* primarily manifests itself within the theological framework. The second chapter of the book introduces God as the Creator who brought all things into being, with subsequent chapters describing these creations, and the second-to-last chapter, 'The Last Judgement'. The book's timeline is linear, with a clear beginning (the creation of all things by God) and an endpoint (the awakening of humanity for the final judgement). The middle section of the book covers the material and is not arranged chronologically but rather categorised by themes. Children gradually come to understand the overall picture of the world through classification across those different themes.

By contrast, verses in *The Three Character Classic*, such as 'From Fu Xi and Shennong to the Yellow Emperor' (自羲农，至黄帝), contain historical narratives in which dynastic succession, periods of order and disorder, the rise and fall of states, exemplary figures, and moral evaluations are interwoven. This interweaving of historical dynastic transitions with moral exemplars fosters in students the impression that shifts in ruling dynasties are intrinsically linked to the virtues of rulers. After all, as the analysis in Chapter 5 revealed, the majority of *Three Character Classic* students studied it to pass the imperial examinations, thereby securing court positions and serving the ruling authorities. Here, the succession of historical dynasties symbolises the passage of time. During this period, students perceive a need to study and practice Confucian virtues to uphold the law and thereby prevent the regime from being overthrown.

For children, this sense of order existing within the Confucian school of thought differs from that found in *Orbis Pictus*. In *Orbis Pictus*, order resembles a world structure existing within a relatively static cosmos, whereas in *The Three Character Classic*, order persists as an immutable form within the continuity of tradition.

6.2.5.5. Clarification and Reflection

In the fifth comparison, this thesis examines the similarities and differences between *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* in relation to the students and the new world they are entering. This is not simply a summary of the first four relations but rather a strengthening of them. Through precise mastery of language sounds, understanding of things and ways of behaving, and the ability to express and regulate their own actions, students can integrate into a complete and meaningful world order in which they can find their proper place.

Comenius first mentioned the word 'world' in *Orbis Pictus* at the end of the opening chapter of *Orbis Pictus*. The scholar in Comenius' words addressed the boy thus: 'First of all, you should know what basic phonemes make up human language; all beings know how to pronounce them, your tongue knows how to imitate them, and your hands are able to depict them. After that, we can step into the world and observe everything.' Comenius states in this passage that mastery of the language learned (including pronunciation, naming, etc.) is a prerequisite for entering and understanding the existing order of the world. That is to say, *Orbis Pictus* is designed to prepare students to enter the world and to help them understand it in an informed and accurate manner. *The Three Character Classic*, which mentions 'filial piety and fraternal duty before knowledge and information' (首孝悌，次见闻), also aims to guide students to define in advance the direction of their self-development and their position in the established relationships between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife in traditional China.

The proposition to be noted here is that all systems of order in the texts presented by *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* are complete and standardised systems that exist prior to the intervention of the individual student. This does not mean that

students are in a completely passive position; rather, they are learners and recipients of order rather than creators or challengers of it.

In *Orbis Pictus*, after students have gained an initial understanding of the alphabet list, with the help of the pictures and numbered notes, they are expected to learn the words independently. Teachers can observe from the side to ensure pupils have captured 'image-text-sound' correspondences. Where necessary, they may explain the cultural symbols depicted (e.g., Y-shaped roads), though this is not mandatory. Teachers do not have the authority of knowledge because, in *Orbis Pictus*, order is considered to exist objectively in the external world (Created by God), and the supreme authority of truth is attributed to the world itself and its creator. The role of the teacher, therefore, is to guide students into the world and to assist them in observing, naming and understanding. Their authority comes from their prior access to and knowledge of the world, as well as from their mastery of the methods for knowing it, but not from their ability to create knowledge. Teachers and students are theoretically on equal footing as they explore knowledge together.

In contrast, for *The Three Character Classic*, teachers must draw on their personal classical literacy and moral understanding to elucidate the rationale for character composition, the historical allusions within the text, and its profound yet concise wisdom. In other words, while identifying words and connecting them to the presentation in the book through *Orbis Pictus* can be achieved without an educator's assistance (though this understanding is not necessarily comprehensive), students may lack the capacity for self-directed learning of *The Three Character Classic* without teachers' pedagogical guidance. Since order is deeply rooted in cultural traditions and classical writings, the authority of truth lies in the correct transmission and interpretation of the classics. According to Han (n.d.), 师者，所以传道受业解惑也, meaning a teacher is one who imparts reasoning, teaches academics, and explains difficult problems. The discourse suggests that, in traditional Chinese culture,

teachers are the authoritative exponents of the sages' teachings and ethical norms. The students' primary task is not to discover these norms independently, but to receive and internalise this system of norms accurately and unambiguously through the teacher's verbal guidance. This suggests that the teacher's authority comes from tradition, an indispensable part of the chain of transmission of true knowledge. The student's role is to recognise and participate in the sacred Confucian order of traditional China, under the teacher's absolute authority.

In summary, by reflecting on the relation between the student and the world/society, it can be found that *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* constitute two complete, self-contained systems of meaning-making. The former leads the child into a world created by God and explorable through reason, while the latter places the child in a human world sustained through moral behaviour.

6.3. Conclusion

Through the pedagogical analyses of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* in Chapters 4 and 5, this chapter conducts a comparative analysis of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* by combining Freiberger's five-fold comparison method. The comparative analysis focuses on five corresponding relations selected from Chapters 4 and 5: the relation between the students and phonological entry, the relation between the students and Chinese characters or vocabulary units, the relation between the students and discourse use, the relation between the students and their own actions, and the relation between the students and the world or society.

Sections 6.2.1 to 6.2.3 focus on analysing the similarities and differences between *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* in terms of language teaching. In Section 6.2.1 Comparison 1, it can be found that both books can be used to teach phonological patterns of the language; however, *Orbis Pictus* uses images of animals and onomatopoeia to help children learn to associate letters with sounds, whilst *The*

Three Character Classic uses the rhythm and rhyme of three-character phrases to enable children to master pronunciation and a sense of rhythm through repeated recitation. In Comparison 2, Section 6.2.2 demonstrates that both books focus on how children learn basic vocabulary and the structure of written language, though they differ in the types of language and text they employ. That is, vocabulary teaching in *Orbis Pictus* is based on an alphabetic writing system: pupils first learn the pronunciation of letters, then understand word pronunciation through phonics, and are helped to link a word's pronunciation, spelling and meaning through the correspondence between images, numbers and text; whereas the Chinese characters in *The Three Character Classic* are logographic; teachers help pupils by breaking down the structure of the characters. For example, with pictographic characters, teachers break down and explain the character's form to connect it to the meaning it represents. In Section 6.2.3 Comparison 3, both books can be used to further develop students' ability to express themselves linguistically once they have mastered pronunciation and vocabulary. The distinction lies in the fact that *Orbis Pictus* leans more toward an explanatory understanding, supported by text and images, whereas *The Three Character Classic* requires more teacher explanation and guided reading due to its highly condensed language.

Sections 6.2.4 and 6.2.5 focus on analysing the educational intentions of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* that go beyond the language instruction mentioned earlier. In Section 6.2.4 Comparison 4, both books seek to educate students on improving their relation with their own actions; however, *Orbis Pictus* does so by guiding students to act wisely by rightly understanding things and activities, whereas *The Three Character Classic* embeds moral knowledge within stories, providing students with models to learn from and emulate. In Section 6.2.5 Comparison 5, both books place students within an ordered world, teaching them to understand and adapt to their place within it. The difference lies in the fact that the world depicted in

Orbis Pictus is a theologically rational one, whereas *The Three Character Classic* depicts a humanistic world centred on ethical relationships and moral conduct.

Through these five comparisons, it can be seen that *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* share many similarities. For example, Chapter 6 has demonstrated that *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* both serve educational purposes regarding language learning and use, whilst at the same time embodying more far-reaching educational intentions. As can be seen from the analysis of Chapters 4 to 6 for both books, the use of these texts to teach pronunciation, written form and discourse functions is merely the beginning of a broader educational process, in which children are gradually guided towards wise action, judgment, and understanding of the world. At the same time, there are many differences between *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*. For instance, differences in the writing systems lead to different teaching methods, and, due to their distinct cultural backgrounds, the two books present students with entirely different world orders.

Following the interpretation of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* in Chapters 4 and 5, and their comparison in Chapter 6, the next chapter focuses on the overall conclusions of this thesis. In the final Chapter 7, this thesis conducts a comprehensive analysis of the educational intentions embedded in the two texts as revealed in the former three chapters, reflects on the contributions and limitations of this research, and explores the implications of this research regarding the role of traditional education classic textbooks in improving the relation between the younger generation and the language, themselves as well as the world order.

7. General Conclusion

7.1. Summary of the Research

This study employs a hermeneutic and comparative framework to conduct a conceptual and textual comparison of two influential textbooks spanning Europe and Asia: *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*. This study repeatedly emphasises that its findings do not aim to judge the relative merits of the two textbooks' teaching methods and content. Instead, it focuses on an interpretive question: how each textbook constructs a world that can be learned through the most fundamental literacy education, and, in doing so, shapes children with educability to become the persons they ought to be. Therefore, this study is not only concerned with what they teach, but also how they organise knowledge, how they position the teacher-student relationship and the learner, and how they help students to understand and adapt to the framework of order, so that learning becomes a process of initiation and formation of personhood.

Based on my understanding of the definition of education, namely, that it involves the intentional improvement of a student's relation with a particular subject matter through the guidance of a teacher, I propose five relations that can be employed using *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* to explore the 5W1H (Who, Whom, What relation, into What, Why and How) students have improved this relation. These five relations include the students and their relation with phonology of the target language, the students and their relation with vocabulary/characters, the students and their relation with discourse application, the students and their relation with self-conduct, and the students and their relation with the wider world/society.

Subsequently, in the comparative analysis phase, this thesis conducted a comparative examination of the similarities and differences among these five relations.

This analysis was grounded in the aforementioned five relations, integrating both Freiberger's five-fold comparative methodology. An important task is to clarify and reflect on the issues that emerge from the comparative process, seeking to explore the roots of the educational logic and cultural contexts behind them, while guarding against the imposition of concepts from one tradition on another or the simplification of the educational intent of the two works in order to measure their effectiveness using modern assessment frameworks. By analysing the five dimensions, this research project reveals that *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* are two distinct pedagogical worlds, each underpinned by the educator's preconceived position and deep expectations of the student or beginner.

The analysis has shown that *Orbis Pictus* introduces the child to the world through images, words, naming, description, classification, and an encyclopaedic ordering of perceivable things. It presents the world as something that can be observed, named, understood, and acted within correctly. By contrast, *The Three Character Classic* introduces the child to the world through rhythmic language, moral maxims, exemplary stories, historical sequence, and Confucian social norms. It presents the world as an ethical, familial, historical, and social order into which the child must be gradually initiated.

The central argument of the thesis is therefore that both texts could be used to educate children by forming particular pedagogical relations. Although they differ greatly in language, form, cultural background, and worldview, both works use textual structure to shape how children pronounce words, engage in discourse, perform actions, and understand the world order. In this sense, education in both texts is not simply the transmission of information but a formative process through which the

younger generation is introduced into a particular understanding of the real world and of their own place within it.

This thesis was guided by one core question and three sub-questions, which can now be answered in turn.

7.2. Answering the Research Questions

RQ 1.1: What pedagogical elements does each text construct, and what intentions do these reflect within their respective educational traditions?

According to this thesis's understanding of education, education is a teaching process through which educators improve learners' relation with certain aspects of the world. The two textbooks, *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, serve as vehicles for education and were analysed in this thesis in accordance with the defining elements of education. As outlined in Section 3.2, this educational process comprises two contextual elements: when and where. It also investigates core 5W1H pedagogical questions, including who educates, who is educated, what relation is improved, what the expected outcome is, how it is improved, and why it matters. Therefore, these key elements are investigated as the analytical framework for examining these two textbooks employed in the educational process.

Orbis Pictus was written in Central Europe in the mid-seventeenth century, in the wake of the Reformation and the religious wars, within a Christian-humanist educational tradition that was increasingly oriented towards the observation of the natural world. Adult educators, by consciously helping young beginners to engage with specific aspects of the world (the five selected improvable relations including the sound, word, discourse, action, and the world order), present the world as a series of nameable and comprehensible objects and activities rooted in a divine order, guiding them towards a visible world that can be observed, named, understood and acted

upon. The pedagogical intention represented in the text is to guide the learner towards clear perception, correct naming, wise speech, rational judgement, and proper action within God's created world.

The Three Character Classic emerged in the thirteenth-century Song Dynasty China, within a mature Confucian examination culture that brought together classical learning, moral cultivation and the path to public office. Through the use of *the Three Character Classic*, educators taught young students to engage with specific aspects of the world (the five selected improvable relations including the sound, word, discourse, action, and the world order) through rhythmic recitation, decomposing Chinese characters, concise historical narratives, exemplary models, introducing the traditional Confucian cultural world to them and helping them find their rightful place within it. The pedagogical intention embodied in the text is to guide the learner towards memorisation, moral cultivation, historical awareness, filial and social responsibility, and participation in a Confucian relational order.

RQ 1.2: What are the key similarities and differences between the two texts in their construction of pedagogical intentions and relations, and how can these be accounted for by their respective historical and cultural contexts?

The comparison revealed both similarities and differences between the two texts, which are deeply connected to their historical and cultural contexts. As mentioned earlier, the subjects of the comparative phase of this thesis are five improvable relations; the similarities and differences addressed in the research question are therefore based on these five relations.

In terms of their similarities, both texts can be used to educate children through the logic of these five relations. Firstly, they could be used to begin with the importance of sound as the primary focus of literacy education, using this as a foundation to extend to more advanced linguistic skills, such as words and discourse; subsequently,

the deeper educational philosophy embedded within the texts is explored to foster the development of behaviour and worldview. Neither of these approaches constitutes abstract teaching; rather, they link abstract linguistic elements to concrete, perceptible forms (the animal illustrations in *Orbis Pictus* and the rhythmic patterns in *The Three Character Classic*). From this perspective, both textbooks suggest that they are not merely about learning to read and write; it is a process of shaping the individual and introducing children to the world simultaneously.

In terms of differences, these two texts exhibit systematic divergences across all five relations, arising from their distinct cultural and historical contexts. When it comes to pronunciation, *Orbis Pictus* links letters to the real-life sounds made by animals; *The Three Character Classic*, on the other hand, teaches students pronunciation through the rhythm and intonation of its three-character phrases; students need to recite it repeatedly after the teacher. When it comes to the relationship between students and words, *Orbis Pictus* points to external objects for naming, while *the Three Character Classic* emphasises the inherent meaning within the characters. At the level of discourse, *Orbis Pictus* describes objects and activities in the world, whilst *The Three Character Classic* condenses history into concise, profound aphorisms that require teacher interpretation. When it comes to teaching pupils' behaviour, *Orbis Pictus* follows the logic of correct understanding leading to wise action (knowing-judging-acting), while *The Three Character Classic* follows the logic of enabling the internalisation of norms through the emulation of role models (remembering-repeating-doing). When it talks about the world order, *Orbis Pictus* presents a universe created by God and examined through reason, whilst *The Three Character Classic* presents a Confucian ethical and ritual order that children must follow. These differences also reshape the role of the teacher: in *Orbis Pictus*, the teacher appears more as a guide who directs the learner's observation of a shared visible world, while in *The Three Character Classic*, however, the teacher is the traditional custodian of authority; pupils rely on the teacher's interpretation and must accept it with respect.

These differences are primarily linked to the characteristics of European languages and those of Chinese character culture. The alphabetic system and phonemic structure of European languages led Comenius to regard the correspondence between letters and pronunciation as the starting point for language learning, whereas the ideographic nature of Chinese characters allows their meanings to be analysed and deduced. In its broader cultural and institutional context, *Orbis Pictus* reflects the Christian humanism and pansophism of 17th-century Central Europe, a context in which education was inextricably linked to the observation, naming, and understanding of the world created by God. *The Three Character Classic* reflects the Confucian context of Song-dynasty China, in which basic education was closely linked to recitation, moral cultivation, the memorisation of history, family order, and preparation for integration into a hierarchical society. The differences between these two works do not stem from one being more advanced than the other, but rather from the fact that they each respond to different languages, different conceptions of knowledge, and differing visions of the qualities that a well-formed person and a well-ordered world should possess.

RQ 1.3: What does this comparison contribute to our understanding of how distinct educational traditions have conceived the task of introducing the world to the younger generation?

Interpreted through the same framework of five relations, these two texts reveal two distinct logics: *Orbis Pictus* presents the world to children in the form of text and images for them to observe, whilst *The Three Character Classic* guides children from recitation led by a teacher to internalising the order of the tradition. On the surface, both textbooks are used in their respective traditions by handing the first book to a child, yet they offer fundamentally different answers to the questions of what the 'world' within them is and what a child needs to know to enter that world. The contribution of this thesis lies precisely in this: through textual comparison in this

thesis, it demonstrates that the task of 'representation' itself has been conceived in different ways across various traditions.

The significance of this comparison lies in demonstrating that different traditions have fundamentally different understandings of knowledge and the world. In *Orbis Pictus*, knowledge is represented as something to be discovered in the perceivable world (outside both the teacher and the pupil). In *The Three Character Classic*, knowledge is presented as residing within a transmitted tradition (held in the Confucian classics and unfolded through the teacher who carries them). The distinction in the knowledge between these two systems results in the teacher holding a different status; this finding returns to the rationale made at the beginning of this thesis.

As mentioned in Section 1.1, an observation was made that many of my British classmates behaved in a relatively equal and confident manner when interacting with their teachers, whereas many other Chinese students and I tended to adopt a more reserved and deferential attitude, feeling a sense of awe and detachment in the face of the teachers' authority. The starting point for this thesis was the hypothesis that these differences in learners' attitudes towards knowledge and authority stem not only from individual differences or the immediate context, but are also, to some extent, influenced by history and education. The comparisons presented in this thesis offer a clue to the answer. From the very first introductory texts, these two traditions have established different teacher–pupil relationships: *Orbis Pictus* positions the teacher as a guide and regards the pupil as a fellow observer independently in the existing world; *whereas The Three Character Classic* positions the teacher as the custodian of traditional authority, and the pupil must accept this tradition with reverence. Of course, it has been said that the observation that initially prompted this study is the result of a combination of various factors; however, this thesis suggests, at the very least, that different forms of human behaviour may be traced back to a

long-standing teaching tradition aimed at guiding children's understanding of the world.

Core RQ: How do the educational traditions embodied in *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* imagine the task of representing the world to the younger generation?

Taken together, the answers to these three sub-questions constitute the core findings of this thesis. To borrow Mollenhauer's (2014) phrase, 'representing the world to the younger generation', both texts demonstrate educators' intentions to represent the entire world to young pupils through a primer, enabling them to learn not only the language but also how to position themselves in their pre-existing, ordered worlds. However, these two traditions conceive of this task in distinctly different ways. For *Orbis Pictus*, the world is a visible, created, orderly realm that encompasses all things; the process of presenting this world is to guide children, through their senses and reason, to observe, name, and understand. For *The Three Character Classic*, the world is ethical, relational and orderly; the process of presenting this world involves introducing children to this historically and culturally shaped realm through recitation and imitation. In other words, the former opens the world outward, as something to be observed and surveyed, while the latter draws the child inward, into an order to be internalised and inhabited. This constitutes this thesis's answer to its core question: the seemingly shared task of introducing the world to the next generation is conceived in two fundamentally distinct ways—one aimed at representing a shared, perceivable world created by God and explorable through reason, and the other at guiding children into a human world sustained through moral behaviour.

In comparing these two very different books, this thesis is not intended to judge the content of the two worldviews as right or wrong; rather, it aims to explore the existence of order and its place in the student's life. This research ultimately reveals that both texts, presumably written for children and new learners, implicitly require

learners to conform to the expectations of the existing social order and to adapt their position in it.

7.3. Contributions to Knowledge

This research contributes to knowledge in the following ways.

First, this thesis contributes to educational scholarship by bringing *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* into direct comparison. As the first systematic comparative study of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, this research offers a glimpse not only of two very different teaching methods and curricula, but also of different conceptions of who an individual is expected to become and what kind of life lies ahead.

Second, this paper contributes to the pedagogical interpretation of these two texts. By focusing on five improvable relations, including the learner's relation to sound, words, discourse, action, and world order, this thesis systematically examines and compares the pedagogical intentions inherent in *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*. In doing so, the thesis shows how each text constructs and introduces the world to younger generations within its respective tradition.

Third, this thesis makes a methodological contribution by combining hermeneutics, the 5W1H teaching framework and Freiberger's comparative method. This integrated framework enables the research to shift from the interpretation of individual texts to structured comparison, whilst still maintaining a focus on the historical and cultural specificity of each text. Consequently, it may provide a useful paradigm for the further development of cross-cultural textual research in the fields of the history and philosophy of education.

7.4. Limitations

The methodological limitations of this research have already been discussed in Chapter 3, including the limits of textual interpretation, the asymmetry between the two texts, the choice of textual editions, the risk of anachronism, and the researcher's positionality. These limitations do not undermine the feasibility of the research, but they define the boundaries within which the findings of this thesis should be understood. This section draws on reflecting on and discussing whether any new limitations have emerged, and the implications of both new and existing limitations for the conclusions of this thesis.

Firstly, as this thesis is based on textual analysis and hermeneutic interpretation, its findings relate to the pedagogical intentions reflected in these two books, rather than their historical educational outcomes or their effectiveness in practice. In other words, this analysis can reveal how each text constructs a world for a learner. However, it is impossible to determine how these books are actually taught in the classroom, nor can it be ascertained whether children are indeed being shaped in accordance with the texts' intended purpose.

Secondly, this research focuses on educators' intentions rather than students' acceptance. The findings of this study reflect what the older generation sought to convey, without addressing the younger generation's actual understanding of these matters; therefore, this study is unable to answer the question of how children receive, understand or reject these books.

Thirdly, this comparison is shaped by my own position as an interpreter. Researchers with differing perspectives may emphasise different relationships or interpret the same textual material differently. As someone from outside the Christian world or Europe, interpreting *Orbis Pictus* and applying Western theoretical frameworks to *The*

Three Character Classic, I have arrived at an interpretation that is defensible, rather than the only possible one.

Fourth, the analysis relies on translation, and its conclusions about meaning are constrained by it. In particular, as there are no terms in English that correspond exactly to Confucian moral terminology, the discussion in this thesis regarding the moral and relational dimensions in *the Three Character Classic* is necessarily approximate. Therefore, the conclusions of this thesis should be read with caution, as cross-linguistic interpretation requires. Furthermore, *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* differ in terms of their editions, language and interpretative traditions. Although every effort has been made in this thesis to treat the selected text and relevant supplementary literature with the utmost rigour, certain meanings may have been altered in the course of translation, and some concepts cannot be perfectly transposed from one language or tradition to another.

Fifth, the interpretative framework adopted in this thesis is inevitably shaped by a particular academic tradition. The concept of education as improving the student's relation with certain aspects of the world (Kenklies, 2019; Lewin, 2018; Friesen & Osguthorpe, 2018), Mollenhauer's (2014) idea of 'representation' and Freiberger's comparative method (2019) have brought certain characteristics of these two texts to light. However, if a framework more directly rooted in Chinese educational thought were adopted, it might lead to different emphases or further interpretations. Although this thesis has endeavoured to avoid misinterpreting ancient texts by applying modern standards, it remains a contemporary academic study. Consequently, the questions raised, the concepts employed, and the comparative framework adopted in this thesis remain influenced by contemporary scholarship yet are not entirely equivalent to the self-understanding of these texts within their original historical context.

7.5. Directions for Further Research

There are several directions in which this research could be further developed. For instance, this thesis has focused primarily on the pedagogical intentions of educators represented in the two classic texts; future research could adopt a more learner-centred perspective. Such research could examine how learners actually received, understood, memorised, resisted, or transformed the educational worlds presented to them. In addition, future research could test and refine the comparative framework developed in this thesis and extend it to other classic texts in education.

7.6. Final Reflection

From the comparative analysis in this research, it can be seen that there are differences in educational logic between the authors of *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*. In *Orbis Pictus*, Comenius tends to begin with sensory perception and the naming of things before moving on to description, understanding, and wise action. The world presented to children is perceptible and describable and is ultimately given order within a theological framework. By contrast, in *The Three Character Classic*, the author typically begins with rhythmic recitation and memorisation before moving on to the internalisation of moral values, imitation, and behaviour governed by social norms. The world presented to children must be committed to memory, passed down and upheld within the framework of Confucianism and the hierarchical system. Consequently, although both texts use elementary literacy education to introduce children into an ordered world, they do so through different pedagogical routes. *Orbis Pictus* begins from visual perception, naming, discourse, rational judgement, and divine creation; *The Three Character Classic* begins from recitation, character form, compressed historical memory, moral imitation, and Confucian relational order.

This model of education not only provides pupils with a new language but also guides children's self-development and promotes social cohesion. From the discussion of the book *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic*, it can be seen that the position of the self cannot be interpreted as an isolated being. That is to say, in the individual's pursuit of self-identity, a self cannot be cut off from the others who surround them in the world, that is, from its historical, cultural, and social contexts.

The analyses in the earlier chapters of this thesis indicate that both *Orbis Pictus* and *The Three Character Classic* present rich content that presents complex educational ideas that require advanced, comprehensive abilities; children at an early age cannot readily understand them upon first encountering the books. For example, abstract ideas, such as virtue, in both books may not be comprehensible to young children; the method employed in the book is intended solely to elicit memory and imitation. Therefore, during this process, children are not required to immediately comprehend the meaning of the reading material; they will instead wait for their epiphany later in life. Consequently, it can be assumed that the pedagogic effect may not always come immediately during or after the pedagogical process; it may come at an uncertain point or never come into effect.

This delayed educational effect explains why teachers in ancient China primarily utilised repeated reading and recitation in Sishu, intended to help children become familiar with the texts and their deeper meanings. Although it might be difficult for children at an early age to fully comprehend these ideas or have a noticeable impact on their minds at the stage of centralised literacy, in the long term, the numerous educational effects associated with these ideas will become apparent. That is to say, once children are familiar with the contents of *The Three Character Classic*, the rich contents are deeply ingrained in their minds. With age and the accumulation of knowledge, these ideological connotations in this book will have a subtle impact on them, far more effective and influential than the teacher's preaching.

Thus, this thesis can draw a conclusion about what the older generation intended to educate the younger generation. Regardless of the era or context in which they were employed, scholars such as Comenius and the author of *The Three Character Classic* were driven by a desire to equip young people with the knowledge and preparation essential for entering the world. During the analysis and study of the two texts, vivid scenes unfolded before my eyes: the teacher holding *Orbis Pictus* in his hand instructing pupils to recite the letter A in response to the sound of a crow, pointing to the table to read the word 'Table'; and the teacher guiding pupils to read and recite *The Three Character Classic* through diverse methods, including point-dot reading and in-person demonstrations.

What becomes clearer through this comparison is that, despite the two books' normative and social ordering function (I would say most books that are popular utilised for public education are unavoidable with a similar political agenda), the meaning of things and the way of doing things are what the older generation seeks to offer the younger generation, shaping their future lives. As such, educators tend to lay a foundation for them to improve their relations with a better self in the world, sooner or later. The fundamental question of education has always been how the preceding generation wishes the next to perceive the world, and how this perspective, in turn, guides them in becoming the person they believe they ought to be within the world they have inherited.

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